



R U S T

A
PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

By
ALGERNON TASSIN



Class PS 3539

Book .A73 R8

Copyright N^o 1911

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

R U S T

R U S T

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY
ALGERNON TASSIN



BROADWAY PUBLISHING CO.

835 BROADWAY

NEW YORK

PS 3539
.A73 R8
1911

Copyright, 1911,
BY
ALGERNON TASSIN

ENTERED AT STATIONER'S HALL, LONDON.
All rights reserved, including that of translation into foreign
languages, including the Scandinavian

© Cl. D 24188

PERSONS

A WAITER.

COLONEL HARRINGTON DODD.

MRS. BRADLEY-STONE.

JUDITH ALLISON.

NICHOLAS ALLISON.

SAM BRADLEY-STONE.

JESSICA EWING.

MISS EWING.

BARNEY MARTINI.

TIME—*The Present.*

ACT ONE

R U S T

ACT I.

(The men's room in the Pequot Country Club, Connecticut. The back gives on a piazza, which is seen from three large windows, reaching almost to the floor and through a screen door, which is the last opening on the right. In the left wall front is a large doorway leading into the hall. There are several small tables scattered over the room, together with cane-seated chairs and an occasional wicker arm-chair. At the table toward the left wall, stands a desk phone.

By the table near center window COLONEL HARRINGTON DODD is reading the Sunday newspaper, and various sheets of it lie scattered about him. He is a man of fifty-five years of age, grizzled, wiry, and tanned, and of soldierly bearing. He is dressed carefully and entirely in white. His movements are marked by lithe precision and clear-cutness—not too professional and suggestive of the man of the world as well as the officer. His tone is habitually dry and quizzical in spite of the equally habitual but faint hint of pathos in his manner. A waiter is filling the match boxes on the tables, gathering up

R U S T

the traces of last night's occupancy, and putting the room to rights.)

DODD: Rather quiet here.

WAITER: Nobody in till afternoon, sir, as a general thing. On Sundays.

DODD: Late, Saturday nights?

WAITER: Yes, sir. All the week-enders, you see. And the commuters don't have to catch a train this morning. *(He takes out the old box of matches on Dodd's table and inserts a fresh one.)*

DODD *(Rising)*: I'm in your way, I guess. *(He starts towards screen door and stops)* It's a bit fresh for the first of June. I'll go across the hall. *(He starts left.)*

WAITER: That's the ladies' room, sir. No men allowed. Almost done, sir.

DODD: You might bring the cigar tray.

WAITER: Yes, sir. *(He starts to go.)*

DODD: Wait a minute. *(Taking out his pipe)* Pipes permitted in this club?

WAITER: *(Hesitating, with a smile)* Here—in the men's room, sir.

DODD *(Quizzically, seeing something in his manner)*: No ladies allowed?

WAITER: This is the men's room, sir. But the ladies go everywhere. Billiard room, card room——

DODD: Hum! *(He has been filling his pipe, and now lights it)* See if there's any mail for me. Colonel Harrington Dodd. *(He resumes his seat at the table.)*

R U S T

WAITER: Beg pardon, sir. As you've just come, sir, your mail will be in your host's box.

DODD: Look under Kinglake then.

WAITER: Kinglake? Beg pardon, sir. But I don't think there's any such name on the membership list, sir.

DODD: What? Of course there is. You must be new here.

WAITER: Have you your two weeks' card, sir?

DODD (*Whimsically, as he gets his card*): Don't you suppose I know my host's name? See for yourself. Judith—Bless my soul, I forgot she'd been married two years! I apologize. Mrs. Allison.

WAITER: Allison! (*With alacrity*) Oh, yes, sir. I'll see, sir.

(*He goes. At the door he stands aside for Mrs. Bradley-Stone, who enters.*

She is a fashionably dressed woman of thirty, somewhat artificial and fast-looking. She seems always curbing a restless superficial energy, and under its rather pleasing surface play, she shows glimpses of a nature both jaded and hard. An engaging, mechanical smile is her chief social equipment. This, it develops, she employs to cover a decided impertinence of speech. At any suggestion of her club activities, she assumes at once the crisp managing manner which an initiation into the mysteries of parliamentary procedure and the possibility

R U S T

of having at any time to take the chair, have imparted to the contemporary society woman.

As the waiter stands aside to let her pass, she turns for a moment to speak to him—having seen Dodd smoking his pipe.)

MRS. B.: A pipe! He's not a member, is he?

WAITER: No, madam.

MRS. B.: Did he ask if he might?

WAITER (*Reluctantly*): Yes, madam.

MRS. B. (*Severely*): And you told him!

WAITER: Yes, madam. The rule hasn't been changed yet, has it?

MRS. B.: Why didn't you tell him that some people objected?

WAITER: He didn't ask me, madam.

(She turns away impatiently and he exits left. She goes up and stands near window, casually eyeing him. Then she sits and coughs slightly.)

DODD (*Looking up from his paper*): Pardon me. I hope smoking is not objectionable to you?

MRS. B. (*Pleasantly, but with a meaning inflection*): Smoking? Not at all.

DODD: My pipe?

MRS. B.: Well—— (*She smiles engagingly.*)

DODD: I beg your pardon. I thought—— (*He rises and walks to door.*)

MRS. B.: Oh, no! Please!

DODD (*Affably*): But if it is annoying——

MRS. B.: Not as a pipe but as a principle. That is, here——inside.

R U S T

DODD: I see. But on the veranda, perhaps. Neither as a principle nor as a pipe.

MRS. B. (*Smiling flirtatiously*): You think I'm quite horrid.

DODD: No, if you don't think I'm too inquisitive for a guest. I understood that in the men's room——

MRS. B.: At present, yes. Until the meeting of the new Board of Directors.

DODD: I see. There is a minority sentiment against it.

MRS. B.: Minorities become majorities.

DODD: If carefully jockeyed.

MRS. B.: Well, I—— (*She smiles.*)

DODD: I see. And you expect to be represented on the New Board?

MRS. B.: Yes. How you do put two and two together.

DODD: You help to support this club, don't you? Then why not get a woman on the Board?

MRS. B. (*Triumphantly*): Going to at the next election. We fought every inch of the way, but we won at last.

DODD: And you?

MRS. B.: I'm running.

DODD: Good! I hope you'll win. I like to see women claim their rights.

MRS. B.: Now don't think I'm one of those horrid women's rights women. Just because I have principles against a pipe.

DODD (*Gallantly*): But only in the men's room, not on the veranda.

R U S T

MRS. B. (*Glibly*): Home is the woman's sphere. It unsexes her to compete with men.

DODD: Then you're not running against a man?

MRS. B.: Oh, no; I wouldn't think of such a thing. Against another woman. She's a dear friend of mine.

DODD: But she'll be harder to beat than a man. Have you planned a campaign?

MRS. B.: I never dined so much at home in my life. In four weeks I've had every man in this club to dinner.

DODD: Dear me, then it's a question of cooks. (*In reply to her look*) Of course she feeds them, too.

MRS. B.: No, she doesn't go in for entertaining. That's where I have the bit on her.

DODD: What's her bait?

MRS. B.: I wish I knew. She doesn't feed them. She doesn't fool them, she doesn't flirt with them. (*She smiles engagingly*) She doesn't seem to be doing anything. But I'm afraid she's landing them just the same. I sort of feel she's a born organizer.

DODD: Who is this low scheming politician?

MRS. B.: Mrs. Nicholas Allison.

DODD: Dear me, I'm hobnobbing in the enemy's camp!

MRS. B.: You know her?

DODD: She gave me my two weeks card. Besides, she's going to feed me. At lunch to-day.

R U S T

MRS. B.: And me, too.

DODD: Indeed? My name is Dodd.

MRS. B. (*Shaking hands*): Mine is Mrs. Bradley-Stone. How do you do, Mr. Dodd? Enemy!

DODD: Dear me, I'm not a member.

MRS. B.: You will be. Here's Mrs. Allison now. (*Calling outside*) Good morning.

(JUDITH, *having passed the windows, enters by the veranda door. She is a younger woman than Mrs. Bradley-Stone, with a self-possessed, quiet manner in which there is some hint of repression—a critic might call it even listlessness. Though young, handsome, and exquisitely gowned, she has an air of not responding vitally to the life around her.*)

JUDITH: Good morning. (*Coming to Dodd with delight*) It's—it's Uncle Harry, isn't it?

DODD (*Taking her outstretched hands*): Judy!

JUDITH: Where's your moustache? Otherwise you haven't changed a bit in five years.

DODD: Hope not at my age. You have.

JUDITH: I should hope I might. The gawky thing I was at twenty!

DODD: But now that I look you over, I should have known you anywhere. You have your father's eyes—just the same.

JUDITH: Just the same. And may I still call you Uncle Harry?

DODD: If you let me call you Judy.

R U S T

JUDITH: Do. It makes me think of father. (*Turning*) Oh, Mrs. Bradley-Stone. Colonel Dodd. He's just back from China.

MRS. B.: We are intimate friends. But you never told me you were Colonel.

DODD: Dear me! Well, you see, I've been retired for five years.

MRS. B.: Five years, at your age? Nonsense!

JUDITH (*Hastily breaking in, as if avoiding an awkwardness*): You got my last note? You're stopping at the hotel? Didn't I tell you how nice it was around here?

MRS. B. (*Sweetly*): Are you thinking of staying here for the summer, Colonel?

DODD: I haven't been. But if Judith's planned it and wants me, I suppose I'll shake down into it. (*Pinching her chin fondly*) I learned long ago it was best to knuckle under at once with this young lady.

JUDITH: As if anybody could make you budge an inch! How do you like the club? Nice little joint, isn't it?

MRS. B. (*Sweetly*): I told you you would be a member of it.

JUDITH (*Sweetly*): You did? How did you guess?

MRS. B.: I can read the Colonel like a book already. Can't I, Colonel? (*She laughs.*)

JUDITH (*Not liking her proprietary air*): Oh! (*To Dodd*) Smoke, won't you? How I'd love to see that pipe I used to fill for you.

R U S T

DODD (*Pleased*): You remember? I fished it out on purpose. (*He takes it out.*)

JUDITH (*Taking it*): How it takes me back. I can see you and father now. Like two friendly locomotives in a row. Puffing—snorting—letting off steam.

DODD: As irreverent as ever!

JUDITH: Filled, too. Here! (*Handing it back to him*) It will seem like old times to smell that pipe again. (*Mischievously, for Mrs. B.'s benefit*) Nothing vague or uncertain about the odor of *that* pipe, Mrs. Bradley-Stone. (*She gets a match from the match box.*) Just as I used to do when I was ten.

DODD (*Looking at Mrs. B.*): Well—er—shan't we go out on the veranda?

JUDITH: Nonsense, this is the men's room. The poor dears smoke their pipes in here. Don't they, Mrs. Bradley-Stone?

MRS. B. (*Sweetly*): Some of them. Until the meeting of the new Board of Directors.

JUDITH: And perhaps afterwards. Even if we—

MRS. B.: We?

JUDITH: They.

MRS. B.: I thought you were a little previous.

JUDITH: Even if they have to make a new rule. No ladies allowed in the men's room.

MRS. B.: No ladies allowed! Why, my husband would live here. I could never get at him. I'll leave the club first!

R U S T

DODD: Ladies, ladies! Let there be no blood shed.

JUDITH: Poor dears, they ought to have some place to themselves. The women have.

MRS. B.: That's different. Besides, it's no argument—they are never in it.

JUDITH: Nevertheless, they have one, and the men can't go in there.

MRS. B.: But that isn't the point just now.

JUDITH (*Sweetly but irritatingly*): What is?

MRS. B.: I thought there was something. Since you weren't feeding them. So that's your campaign, is it?

JUDITH (*Sweetly*): Isn't it a good one? Come on, Uncle Harry. (*She strikes the match.*)

MRS. B.: Colonel! I'll buy you a cigar!

DODD: Ladies, this is a pipe of peace. So I won't smoke it. (*He blows out the match and pinches Judith's chin.*) Especially as I'm to be a member here. You rogue of a politician. Getting a vote like that.

JUDITH: Hush! Here's Nicholas. He's not to know yet.

MRS. B. (*Looking interested*): Not to know? (*NICHOLAS enters by left. He is a serious and prosperous-looking business man of forty. He is eminently correct, conservative, and conscientious, according to family traditions of long standing—a machine-made character equally without stain and without color; but a pleasant and honorable gentleman, who—as he takes himself very seriously and*

R U S T

never doubts the propriety of his ideas—has succeeded very young in life. His enemies would call him a prig; his friends, a tower of strength. He is neither one nor the other, only a man who somewhat persistently pursues the usual ideals of good form along the track beaten out for him by his forbears, and consequently one who prides himself on his breadth of view and liberality. This latter he shows by well-bred tolerance of other people's notions and an indulgent condescension which betrays that to him they appear childish. But he is without pomposity or pretense, his manners are simple and genuine, and his bearing toward his wife has a marked affectionateness.)

NICHOLAS: Good morning, Mrs. Bradley-Stone.

JUDITH: Nicholas, here is the Colonel. Uncle Harry, my husband.

NICHOLAS (*Shaking hands cordially*): How do you do? Judith tells me you were the idol of her girlhood.

DODD: Yes, I never spanked her but once.

JUDITH: Tattle-tale. Don't tell my husband that or he might try it himself. It's hard enough as it is to convince him I've grown up.

NICHOLAS: By the way, Mrs. Bradley-Stone. Where were you going to pick up your husband?

MRS. B.: He's going to pick me up.

R U S T

NICHOLAS: Good! We are lunching here instead of at the house.

JUDITH: Nicholas!

NICHOLAS: My dear, I discharged the cook last night.

MRS. B.: That splendid cook!

JUDITH: Last night? (*Concealing her annoyance*) And you never told me!

NICHOLAS (*Affectionately*): I didn't want to bother you, dear.

JUDITH: But what about Miss Ewing and Jessica?

NICHOLAS: I telephoned Miss Ewing. She and her niece will join us here.

JUDITH (*Turning to the others*): Very well, I will see what they can do for us.

NICHOLAS: No need to trouble, my dear. I have already ordered. It's a little surprise.

JUDITH (*Forcing a laugh*): Yes, it *is* a surprise. Mrs. Bradley-Stone, Mr. Allison has no doubt ordered you the best luncheon he could get.

MRS. B. (*With her mechanical smile*): Oh, we shan't starve! I'm only sorry I'm dining out to-night, or you could come to me for dinner. Two meals in one day at the club, you know.

JUDITH (*Dryly*): Yes.

MRS. B.: Isn't it a pity, Mr. Allison, Judith doesn't go out more?

NICHOLAS: I wish you could persuade her. (*To Judith*) Never mind, dear. I sent the housekeeper to town at once for another one.

R U S T

JUDITH: That's where she was this morning, then! (*To Dodd*) Fortunately, Uncle Harry, we shall have some sort of dinner to-night. The maid can cook.

NICHOLAS: My dear, I'm very sorry. She came to me after breakfast and was as impudent as the cook.

JUDITH (*Blankly*): You discharged her?

NICHOLAS (*Imperturbably*): I could do nothing else.

JUDITH (*Conquering her growing irritation*): Well, Uncle Harry, your first meal at my house will remind you of old times. You won't feel bad if you have to eat one of my messes again, will you?

DODD (*With conviction*): Nothing like one of Judith's stews, is there, Mr. Allison? She can squeeze more juice out of a bone than any cook this side of France.

NICHOLAS (*Smiling*): That's an accomplishment I never heard of, Judith.

JUDITH (*Coldly*): You never gave me the chance. (*To Dodd*) No, Nicholas doesn't believe in my cooking. Or doing anything else. I'm for ornament only.

MRS. B. (*Cattily*): I'm sure it's lovely of him to relieve you of all bother. Fancy *my* husband being interested in household affairs.

JUDITH: He's not interested in household affairs, Mrs. Bradley-Stone. He's interested in me.

DODD (*Making another attempt to ease mat-*

R U S T

ters): And as for omelets! All I can say is you'll be glad you bounced the cook tonight.

NICHOLAS: Some other night, perhaps. This evening we are all motoring over to the beach.

JUDITH: This evening! But—— Well, Uncle Harry. And I wanted you to spend your first day with us.

NICHOLAS: Oh, we'll run over for tea.

DODD: Judy, how far away do you live?

JUDITH: About two miles.

DODD (*Eager to draw her away, pointing out of window*): Over there?

JUDITH: No, the Sound is that way. On this side. There's a place where you can just see the chimneys between the trees. (*They go out on the veranda and pass the windows out of sight.*)

MRS. B.: Mr. Allison, I think Judith is a very lucky woman. Sometimes I wonder if she knows it.

NICHOLAS: She had enough bothering about the house when she was younger.

MRS. B.: But you know after all it isn't supposed to be a man's business.

NICHOLAS (*Laughing*): Heavens, don't think I'm always discharging cooks and maids! I only happened to be around this time. We have the best housekeeper money will buy. I'm glad to say that between the two of us we relieve Mrs. Allison of everything.

MRS. B.: I wish you'd talk to Sam and show

R U S T

him how to treat a lady. Now you're a model husband.

NICHOLAS: Thank you.

MRS. B. (*After looking out of the window*): Of course I can expect a model husband to be on my side.

NICHOLAS: You're not divorcing Sam?

MRS. B.: No such luck. (*After glancing out again*) Are you pipe or anti-pipe?

NICHOLAS: I shan't vote.

MRS. B. (*Sharply*): Throw away your vote?

NICHOLAS: I don't like these squabbles. Though I don't see why a man shouldn't smoke what he chooses, in his own room.

MRS. B.: After all, why should he have a room of his own? Theoretically, of course. But practically, he's so selfish. Sam would be barricading himself here all the time.

NICHOLAS: But the ladies——

MRS. B. (*Interrupting briskly*): That isn't the point just now, is it? I hope when you think it over you will change your mind. And persuade Judith.

NICHOLAS: Judith? She doesn't care either. (*Half sighing*) She cares so little, really, about anything.

MRS. B.: Is it possible you don't know? She's the head of the pipes.

NICHOLAS: Head? What do you mean?

MRS. B.: She's going to permit pipes if she's elected to the Board of Directors. The lady member, you know.

R U S T

NICHOLAS: You're joking. Why should she be elected?

MRS. B.: She's one of the candidates.

NICHOLAS: Judith!

MRS. B.: Oh, I'm so sorry. But how could I guess she hadn't let you—you didn't know.

NICHOLAS: I couldn't think of it. (*Going to window and calling*) Judith!

MRS. B.: Oh, please don't let her suspect I told you! It would look so queer. I'm the other candidate, you know.

NICHOLAS: I can't believe she would do such a thing without consulting me. But if it's so, it must be stopped.

MRS. B.: Well, come down to the office and find out about it there. I simply couldn't have her think I blundered into telling you. She's coming. Please. (*She draws him away.*)

NICHOLAS: Very well. But I shall be much amazed if—— (*They go by door left.*)

JUDITH (*Passing the windows with Dodd*): What is it, Nicholas? (*They saunter to door*) Yes, Nicholas? (*Coming in*) Why, he isn't here! (*To Dodd as they come down*) Uncle Harry, it is so good to see you again.

DODD (*Taking both of her hands*): Happy, Judy?

JUDITH: Perfectly.

DODD: Perfectly? Served me right for asking such a silly question. May I ask another one?

JUDITH: Of course.

R U S T

DODD: Contented, Judy?

JUDITH: Um—yes.

DODD: Not a want in the world?

JUDITH: Unfortunately no.

DODD: Unfortunately?

JUDITH: How could I have? My husband is rich and lavishes everything upon me. You see how anxious he is that I should have no cares, no worries. He gives me everything in the world. Except—— (*She pauses.*)

DODD: Except?

JUDITH: Something to bother about, I guess.

DODD: Hum! Bored, Judy?

JUDITH: Frightfully.

DODD: Nothing in the social whirl?

JUDITH: I would rather dry up and blow away than whirl like Mrs. Bradley-Stone. It wouldn't be so silly, perhaps, if I had been brought up in it. But to run around like a squirrel in a cage and get nowhere! It's just sham exercise, that's all. Once you've had the whole woods to range in.

DODD (*Whimsically*): What's the woods? Mere rhetoric?

JUDITH: Something to tackle—get your teeth in—some nut to crack.

DODD: I see. And what were these particular woods that you ranged, getting your teeth in and cracking nuts?

JUDITH (*Getting interested*): Father's business snarls. You know everything was going to pieces when you left.

R U S T

DODD: Poor old Joe! Surprised he kept his head above water so long.

JUDITH: Do you know why he did?

DODD: Why?

JUDITH: I floated him.

DODD: You?

JUDITH: You remember he was getting feeble when you came to say goodbye— (*In a constrained tone*) Just after you were retired. Well, I just *had* to help him. And I was crazy to. It began with little personal matters he didn't want to put in anybody else's hands. Then little by little I learned the ropes. I thought I saw where the leaks were and I knew I could stop them. Poor old dad! No use explaining to him, I couldn't make him see it. But afterwards I proved it.

DODD: After—?

JUDITH: After the final smash. Then I *had* to pitch in. Down at the office. Towards the last he was willing for me to do everything. And before he went he saw the way clear. Oh, if he could only have lived long enough to see every cent paid off!

DODD: It was!

JUDITH: Yes. I went to see the creditors one by one. I convinced them there was a fighting chance, if they didn't force him into bankruptcy. They hemmed and hawed and decided to let me try it.

DODD: Judy! And you did it! Really took the reins yourself?

R U S T

JUDITH (*Nodding*): At the office. And I cleaned up one thing after the other. Oh, it was glorious! If there's anything in the world magnificent, it's showing a lot of skeptical men that you are on your job. That you're good for something besides taking dictation. That you've got a scheme and can put it through.

DODD: You paid all your father's debts!

JUDITH: Every one. A hundred cents to the dollar. And what's more—got the business on its feet again. I was just going to take a flier when—— (*She pauses.*)

DODD: What?

JUDITH: Nicholas.

DODD: Oh!

JUDITH: And I married.

DODD: Sold out?

JUDITH: I tried to persuade him to let me go on running it. At least until—other responsibilities came. Then to let me keep a controlling hand. But he couldn't bring himself to see it. None of the Allison women had ever done such a thing. I suppose he was right. At any rate, the woman in me was too strong. I gave up Kinglake & Company.

DODD: And become junior partner in the Allison firm.

JUDITH: Junior partner! Uncle Harry, I became nothing in the world but the disbursing clerk—with all bills o. k'd. You know how father brought me up—to handle the house money, to keep my own books, hire the servants?

R U S T

Well, when father was rich and I was a kiddie, I ran his house for him—now I have a house-keeper and my husband discharged the cook yesterday without my knowledge. When father went to pieces, I ran his office for him—made ten dollars do the work of ten, knew all that was going on, handled what came in and what went out. Now I make all the bills I want to and haven't a cent of my own.

DODD: Not so bad as that.

JUDITH: Isn't it? It just is. None of the Allison women ever had an allowance. He doesn't care how I make the money fly, so long as it's his money. But I don't complain of that, for I've never felt the need of any. Whatever I want, I get it on the bill.

DODD (*Encouragingly*): Well, there's something in that.

JUDITH: Yes—something to do. You should see what I buy when I'm bored stiff. It makes me sick the way I spend money. Just to occupy my mind.

DODD: Why don't you join the Daughters of something?

JUDITH: They don't try to do anything. Except to be made President.

DODD: Philanthropy.

JUDITH: Nicholas signs the checks. Besides, he wouldn't let me really do anything first hand.

DODD: Reading? Study?

JUDITH: For what? Something I couldn't use. Don't you see I wasn't a business woman

R U S T

five years for nothing? I've got to have some practical aim in view.

DODD: We now come to the last thing—a hobby-horse.

JUDITH: You dear Uncle Harry. Don't you suppose I'd lasso one in a minute if I could? But Nicholas wouldn't let me harness it. None of the Allison women ever did. You know very well you can't do anything interesting without making a business of it. Now can you?

DODD: No, I suppose you can't.

JUDITH: Very well, then. There we are. Nicholas thinks I've had enough of business. He didn't marry me to have me go on working.

DODD: H'm! I shall have to smoke my pipe on it.

JUDITH (*Suddenly*): Why do you suppose that woman wants to keep the men from enjoying themselves in their own room?

DODD: My dear, she just wants to *stop* something.

JUDITH: But why?

DODD: You ought to know. For something to do.

JUDITH: But what sense is there in that!

DODD: My dear, be charitable. There is a sense of busy-ness. Busy-ness exhibits itself in two ways: To make something where there was nothing before, and to make nothing where before there was something. Either way gives one a feeling of importance.

JUDITH: Well, I'm feeling very unimportant.

R U S T

Perhaps that's why I want at this moment to get on that wretched little Board of Directors more than anything else in the world. Silly, isn't it?

DODD: H'm! I don't know.

JUDITH: You know it is. You're laughing at me. A grown-up woman with so little to occupy her mind as all that. To run a pipe campaign!

DODD: Every woman's got to run something. Why don't you run Nicholas?

JUDITH: If I could have run him I wouldn't have married him. But let me tell you whom you'll meet at luncheon——

NICHOLAS (*Entering at left*): My dear!

JUDITH: Yes? (*Divining from his manner he has something to say*) Oh, just a minute. Uncle Harry, if you insist upon going to the hotel before luncheon, you'll just about have time.

DODD (*Humorously, aware of the situation*): H'm! Yes, certainly. (*He goes up center.*)

JUDITH (*Going with him*): Goodbye. Be sure you don't keep us waiting. (*He goes; she comes down*) Yes?

NICHOLAS: Judith, they told me at the office—I don't want you to run for the Board of Directors.

JUDITH: Oh! (*Quietly, after a moment*) What are your reasons?

NICHOLAS: My reasons? You know how I dislike such things. (*He waits for her to speak;*

R U S T.

as she does not, he continues) I was amazed to find you had allowed your name to be put up. Without consulting me.

JUDITH (*As quietly*): What are your reasons for *that*?

NICHOLAS: For what?

JUDITH: Expecting me to consult you.

NICHOLAS (*With grave astonishment*): Why should you not?

JUDITH (*Smiling seriously*): Excuse me, Nicholas. I asked you first. Why should I?

NICHOLAS: My dear, it would seem the only answer I could make to a question so absurd. Why should a wife consult her husband? You are not reasonable.

JUDITH (*Without sarcasm*): I am willing to learn how to be. I ask you why you don't want me to run, and you answer it is because you don't. I ask you why you should expect me to consult you, and you answer why shouldn't I. We don't seem to get far on that tack, do we?

NICHOLAS: But ought you not to consult my preference? I prefer that you should not do this thing.

JUDITH: If it is a mere matter of preference, why should you not consult mine?

NICHOLAS: My dear, you have never spoken like this before. My desires have up to this time been sufficient.

JUDITH: Yes. But I've been thinking matters over lately. Now this seems a harmless thing. And I wish to do it.

R U S T

NICHOLAS (*Anxiously*): My dear, do not let us quarrel.

JUDITH (*Lightly*): I have no intention of quarreling.

NICHOLAS: Then you will withdraw your name?

JUDITH: Certainly. Do you mean to say you haven't already withdrawn it?

NICHOLAS (*Slightly embarrassed*): I told them when you knew of my objections I was sure you would decline.

JUDITH: Thank you.

NICHOLAS: Why do you say that?

JUDITH: For giving me the opportunity to do so.

NICHOLAS: My dear, I don't think you are treating me quite fairly—in taking this tone.

JUDITH: Perhaps not. But I should like to ask you a favor in return.

NICHOLAS (*Relieved*): Gladly.

JUDITH: I should be very grateful if you would always allow me to withdraw my own name—in reality as well as in appearance. If for instance you have discharged the cook and arranged luncheon here for guests invited to the house, do not allow me to learn it for the first time in the presence of the guests. Particularly Mrs. Bradley-Stone.

NICHOLAS: My dear, you know my only thought was to save you bother.

JUDITH: Suppose I told you that was my reason for not consulting you about the Board?

R U S T

I fear you would say that was unreasonable, too. Only in that case you would be right. That was not why I didn't consult you.

NICHOLAS (*Surprised*): Then why was it?

JUDITH: I knew you would disapprove.

NICHOLAS: You knew—and put your name up?

JUDITH: My dear Nicholas—I wonder if you have any idea how many things you disapprove of. I might as well be a Dresden-China shepherdess on a mantel-piece. My only vocation in life is to smile and hold a crook—with a blue ribbon tied on it. And one I couldn't use even if attacked by a particularly violent lamb.

NICHOLAS (*In genuine amazement*): My dear, I didn't know you felt like a Dresden-China shepherdess. What is it? Is there anything you want?

JUDITH: Yes. Sheep.

NICHOLAS: I think I hardly understand you. Tell me what you mean. I will get you anything you want. You know, my dear, that's what I married you for.

JUDITH: Well, I want just now to run for the Board of Directors.

NICHOLAS: My dear, I don't think we need to go into that again. I have told you my objections quite fully.

JUDITH: I forgot. So you did.

NICHOLAS: And I thought it was very nice of you to give up the matter.

R U S T

JUDITH: Well, we agree on that point, Nicholas.

(Enter MISS EWING. She is a majestic and buxom lady, with high piled white puffs and a Boston air. Her looks and the severe elegance of her black gown contrast oddly with a fidgety nervousness of speech.)

JUDITH: Good morning, Miss Ewing.

NICHOLAS: Good morning.

MISS E.: Good morning. (Anxiously) Jessica not here?

JUDITH: Wasn't she coming with you?

MISS E.: She went out in the car this morning and was to go on to your house. Then I got your phone and didn't know what to do.

JUDITH: Don't worry. They will tell her that— (With the slightest of pauses) Mr. Allison ordered luncheon at the club.

NICHOLAS: Perhaps I had better go after her.

MISS E.: Oh, I couldn't think of such a thing. I suppose there's really no need of anxiety.

JUDITH: Let's telephone over and see. And then there can be no uncertainty about their sending her on here.

MISS E. (Chirruping): Uncertainty? Didn't you leave definite word?

JUDITH (After waiting a moment for Nicholas to speak): We changed our plans suddenly.

WAITER (Appearing at door left): Beg pardon, madam—

R U S T

JUDITH: Oh, have them switch on this phone at the office, please.

WAITER: Yes, madam. There are some packages for you.

JUDITH: For me?

WAITER: A man brought them from town by special delivery.

JUDITH: I didn't order any packages. Why did he come here?

WAITER: They told him at the house, madam.

JUDITH: It's all right then, Miss Ewing. For a moment I couldn't think who would be there. Those two Swede girls haven't any sense. And the cook and my maid have been—have left suddenly. Together with the butler.

NICHOLAS (*In blank amazement*): The butler?

JUDITH: Certainly. He's the maid's husband. And the housekeeper has gone to town to get in a new lot. So we were left with no one over Sunday. I am so glad, Nicholas, those two Swede girls have managed to get something through their heads at last. They will look out for Jessica.

MISS E.: What a special Providence! If I had known, I should have been positively nervous!

WAITER: Beg pardon, madam. The packages?

JUDITH: Bring them in and let's see what they are.

WAITER: Yes, madam. They're right here.

R U S T

(*He brings in six hat boxes, three in a pile, each held together by a cord—a pile in each hand.*)

JUDITH: Oh, those hats. I had forgotten them.

MISS E. (*Chirruping*): Forgotten six hats!

JUDITH (*To the Waiter*): Where's the receipt? (*He hands her it.*) I bought them yesterday morning.

MISS E.: Six hats in one morning!

JUDITH: Yes. (*She is signing the receipt*) A dollar, please, Nicholas.

MISS E.: What on earth for?

JUDITH: For me. (*Taking the dollar*) Thank you, Nicholas.

MISS E.: What can you want with six hats all at once?

JUDITH: I don't really want them, I just want to buy them. (*She gives the waiter the receipt and the dollar bill.*) Give this to the man, please. (*He goes.*) When you've absolutely nothing to do, you can spend a gloriously absorbing morning that way. There's nothing that takes all your mind so. Each one of those boxes was good for a full half hour by the clock.

MISS E.: Well, it may be my Boston notions! But I never heard of anything more scandalous!

JUDITH: Trying on gowns is another way. But that hurts your feet so.

MISS E.: Isn't it scandalous, Mr. Allison?

R U S T

NICHOLAS (*Smiling indulgently*): Why so? I think it very reasonable.

MISS E.: But all that money wasted!

JUDITH: Wasted? If three golden hours of something to do are not worth paying for, I should like to know what is. Besides, I never give over fifty dollars for a mere time-killer. Anything more than that is extravagant.

MISS E. (*Groaning*): Oh! six times fifty—six fives are thirty—three hundred dollars! That my Esquimaux women might have had! If I could only interest you in philanthropy! Why, you could use up much more than three hours in perfectly delightful correspondence with the Board about it. They never agree with your ideas and you have to explain them. And think of the good you would be doing. To be the harbinger of civilization to three hundred Esquimaux women.

JUDITH: One dollar apiece. Bibles?

MISS E.: Not at all. You know that I have serious doubts as to the suitability of the Christian religion for other civilizations. Each race should evolve a religion of its own. By no means Bibles.

JUDITH: What then?

MISS E.: Petticoats.

NICHOLAS: Petticoats?

MISS E.: I am credibly informed they wear none at all. Dress just like the men. How can one expect the race ever to become refined!

JUDITH: But in Turkey ladies wear trousers.

R U S T

MISS E.: And the men skirts. It doesn't matter which. (*Glibly*) The differentiation of women has always been the first step towards civilization.

NICHOLAS (*Smiling indulgently*): Well, why shouldn't a race evolve a costume of its own, too?

MISS E.: Certainly they should. I am the last one to destroy individuality. And for that reason I have designed a petticoat with racial characteristics. Instead of being fur-lined—for the cold, you know—the fur is on the outside, and the petticoat is worn over the—the leggins. (*She whispers to Judith*) Like a Union suit, you know. The American representative at Upernavik can get the petticoat for just one dollar in our money—Judith, if you only realized how many delightful hours one spends in writing letters! Then one by one as the subscriptions come in, he distributes them. You see, there is nothing romantic about my scheme. It's all on a business basis. Let me get one thousand Esquimaux wives and mothers to wearing my petticoats and I will guarantee a perceptible growth in civilization within one generation.

JUDITH: Think of all the petticoats in those boxes.

MISS E.: And each a stepping stone to the higher life. (*Suddenly*) Do you suppose those Swede girls could have made a mistake?

JUDITH: Nicholas, you might ride over and see.

R U S T

NICHOLAS: Yes. (*He starts towards center door, taking his hat from the table.*) But I'm sure she's all right, Miss Ewing.

(*Mrs. Bradley-Stone enters at door left, followed by SAM, her husband. He is a lean, taciturn, sporty-looking man, who stalks around gloomily and is as frugal with his actions as with his words; tremendously bored and constantly disgusted at his wife's slightly veiled insolence.*)

MRS. B. (*Calling gaily*): Where is our host skipping to?

NICHOLAS: Just down the road a minute.

SAM (*Calling after*): I'll go with you.

MRS. B.: No you won't. You'll stay here and have a nice little chat with Miss Ewing. Miss Ewing, my husband. Such as he is.

MISS E. (*Holding out her hand*): How do you do?

MRS. B. (*As Sam bows and takes her hand, she speaks of him as she would a lap dog*): He's such a nice little chatter, Miss Ewing. Aren't you, Sam? Yes, he says he is. Didn't you hear him say he was a nice little chatter?

SAM (*Tightening his lips in an ugly manner*): Aw, cut it out!

(*He goes and sits at the table center.*)

MRS. B.: For Heaven's sake, what are all those boxes? (*Eagerly*) Place-cards for luncheon?

JUDITH: Petticoats. No, I mean hats.

MRS. B.: Hats! Yours?

R U S T

JUDITH: Yes.

MRS. B. (*To Sam*): Mr. Allison knows how to treat a lady. And I haven't a decent hat to my head. What do you want with all those when you go out so little?

JUDITH (*Sweetly*): So that I won't have to wear one twice.

MRS. B. (*Somewhat taken aback*): Sam, don't tell me I'm extravagant again. (*By this time she has thought up a rejoinder.*) Going out so much, I couldn't think of such a thing. But six will last you through the spring, won't they?

JUDITH (*Sweetly*): The fall styles will be in shortly. These are all summer ones. Would you like to see them?

MRS. B. (*Divided between desire to see them and annoyance at Judith*): Will there be time before luncheon?

JUDITH: Yes, we're waiting for Jessica.

MRS. B.: And besides, the last time I lunched at the club we had to wait an hour. Don't you remember, Sam? You said there wasn't a thing on the table fit to eat.

SAM (*Disgusted*): Aw, cut it out!

MISS E.: *Where* do you suppose Jessica is?

JUDITH: Let's open the hats.

(*She takes the cord off of one pile of boxes.*)

MISS E.: Judith, I have no heart for hats when I think of your extravagance.

MRS. B.: Well, I have.

JUDITH (*Pitching her one of the boxes*): Try this.

R U S T

MISS E. (*As the box flies through the air*):
Oh! how can you handle a hat in that way!

JUDITH: Here's another.

(*She pitches one at Miss Ewing, who instinctively catches it.*)

MISS E.: Judith! You might have ruined it.
I heard a rattle.

(*She shakes the box cautiously.*)

MRS. B. (*She has opened hers and thrown the tissue paper on the floor, and is now surveying the hat in her hand*): Judith! You could never wear this in the world. It takes color.

JUDITH (*Who has opened the third box*):
How do you like this?

MRS. B.: Well, at least that's less trying.
Let me see it.

(*She sticks her hat on the post of a chair and takes Judith's.*)

MISS E. (*Who has not been able to restrain her curiosity and has finally opened hers*):
What a dream!

JUDITH: Sixty petticoats in that.

MISS E. (*Enthusiastically*): It's worth every cent of it. (*Checking herself*) I mean these materials are frightfully expensive.

MRS. B. (*Turning and looking at it, takes it from Miss E.*): Now, that's really a peach. That is, for my style. But I don't see what possessed you to buy it.

JUDITH (*Sweetly*): Yes, looks like a race track, doesn't it? Come on, let's open the others.
(*She slips the cord on the second pile and shoves*

R U S T

the upper boxes off on the floor. The ladies hang their hats on the chair posts and run to her. The three kneel before the boxes and take out the hats, throwing the papers around. The floor is by this time covered with boxes, box-tops, and paper. They hold the hats critically before them.)
This one I really like.

(Mrs. Bradley-Stone rises, goes to the hat she has admired and compares it critically with the one in her hand. Hangs the second one on the chair post and keeps the other—the one that cost sixty dollars. The other two ladies are going through the same process of selection, keeping up all of them a little buzz of comment.)

MRS. B.: This brim flares too much for you, Judith. What in the world made you get it? You'll look like a pill in a pill box.

JUDITH (*Noticing her covetous tone*): Yes, I suppose so. I can't wear that sort of thing, but I simply couldn't resist.

MRS. B. (*Lingeringly*): It needs more style than you have to carry it off.

JUDITH: Try it on.

MRS. B.: Yes, I think it would just suit me. (*Sam, who has been sitting immovable through all this litter in absolute disgust, has taken out his pipe, filled it, and reached for a match. He now gives a grunt. She looks at him and sees his pipe.*) Sam!

SAM: What?

MRS. B.: Don't you know where you are!

R U S T

SAM: Oh, the pipe. (*After measuring her for a moment, he puts the pipe in his pocket and surveys the scene.*) Bully men's room, this!

MRS. B.: You don't mind if I try it on, dear?

JUDITH: Not at all.

MRS. B. (*Looking around the room*): I don't see why there isn't a glass in here. Sam, there's a glass in the ladies' room on the mantel.

SAM: I can't go in there!

MRS. B.: We'll let you now. There's nobody there. Go on. (*Sam gets up and, kicking the papers out of his way savagely, exits left.*) I'll have a glass put in here when I'm on the Board. (*As she takes off her own hat, she suddenly eyes Judith slantwise.*) Too bad, Judith, your husband won't let you run.

JUDITH (*Quietly*): How did you know?

MRS. B.: I was at the office when he found out.

JUDITH: I see.

SAM (*Coming in, carrying the mirror*): Here!

MRS. B.: Now hold it for me. (*She puts on the hat.*) There's a good boy. So glad to do anything for his wifey, aren't you, dear? Yes, he says he is. Don't you hear him say he's so glad to do anything for his wifey?

SAM: Aw, cut it out!

MRS. B.: Higher. (*Admiring herself*) Judith, you might have bought this for me. It just hits me off, doesn't it, Miss Ewing?

MISS E. (*Who has put both of her hats in their boxes but without their papers, and the*

R U S T

boxes one on top of the other by the wall left, now comes to Mrs. B., and circles the hat critically): Yes. But you need more hair, don't you think?

MRS. B.: Of course, a few more puffs. How much will you take for it, Judith?

JUDITH: I don't want to sell it. As you say, it's rather loud for me; but I can wear it once or twice.

MISS E.: Once or twice! Sixty dollars!

MRS. B.: You got your leg pulled. I'll give you fifty for it.

MISS E. (*Warmly*): It's worth every cent. Look at that lace.

MRS. B.: But she'd be a pill in it. You'll give her fifty, won't you, Sam?

SAM: If you want to buy it, use your own money.

MRS. B.: But, Sam, I'm on next month's allowance now.

MISS E.: Why, today's the first!

SAM: That's your lookout. I give you your money every month to do what you choose with. You never ask your husband for more than your allowance, do you, Mrs. Allison?

JUDITH: No. (*Briskly*) Mrs. Bradley-Stone, if you want the hat you can have it for what it cost me. Sixty dollars.

MRS. B.: But it's second-hand now. And I should have to pay for altering it a bit. (*Impatiently*) Hold up the glass, Sam. How do you like me in it?

R U S T

SAM (*Without enthusiasm*): Rotten.

MRS. B. (*To Judith*): What do you say?

JUDITH: Sixty or nothing. Cash down.

MRS. B. (*Scrutinizing herself once more*): Well, you are a Jew.

SAM: Put up or shut up. I ain't a mantel-piece.

MRS. B.: Well, Sam, advance me the money, dear.

SAM: Not by a jugfull. I paid you your money this morning, what was left of it.

(*He goes out with the glass.*)

MRS. B. (*Opening her bag and taking out a roll of bills*): You are two Jews together. (*Counting out sixty*) Well, here you are. You must feel as if you were in business again—driving such a sharp bargain.

JUDITH: Yes, I do. It's a fine feeling—handling your own money.

MISS E.: Oughtn't Mr. Allison to be back? I'm positive Jessica didn't go to the house and he's looking for her. (*To Sam as he enters*) Mr. Bradley-Stone, I wish you'd take your car and see.

SAM (*With alacrity*): All right.

MRS. B.: What are you so anxious to go for? I guess I'll go with you.

SAM: Huh! How'll I know her?

MISS E.: She's in the Browns' car. We're visiting them.

MRS. B.: You're glad to take a little spin

R U S T

with wifey before luncheon, aren't you, dear? Yes, he says he is. Don't——

SAM (*Interrupting, to Miss E.*): Better come too.

JUDITH: Why not? You're a bit nervous. It will give you something to do.

MRS. B.: Might as well take my hat along and leave it at the office. Sam, bring the hat-box. (*Picking out the best box*) That one. (*He gets the bottom and top of the box and starts grumpily by door left.*)

MISS E.: I guess if you don't mind, I will go with you.

MRS. B. (*At the door, sweetly*): And what time may we expect luncheon, dear?

JUDITH: Be back, all of you, at one o'clock. (*Looking at her watch*) Just a half hour. (*They go. Alone, she puts up her watch and after a moment laughs.*) A nice party Nicholas is having! (*She puts back one of the hats in the box. Then another. Discontentedly she flings in the third as if she were pitching a quoit.*) Sixty dollars! (*She takes the money out of her bag to look at it. She puts it back and shuts the bag with a snap.*) From her allowance!

(*With a crunch she scoops up the papers from the floor and stuffs them in one of the boxes and slaps the boxes down one on top of the other in the pile which Miss Erving has started. She goes to the table, and, taking up the newspaper Dodd has been reading, sits and looks at it. After a moment she*

R U S T

throws it down impatiently, gets up, and with another thought, starts to the phone, takes off the receiver and is about to speak. But she puts it back again and goes to door left instead.

Past the window come two figures, a man and a girl, and as Judith stands at the archway left, they get to the door. The girl is somewhat disheveled and her duster is torn; and she is leaning heavily on his arm, which supports her around the waist. She is a prettyish girl of twenty, dressed in a carefully cultivated but somewhat bizarre personal style. This latter is not without warrant, for, although boyishly slender, her figure possesses both in movement and in repose an allurements which is none the less genuine for being self-consciously heightened. At present she has sunk with voluptuous abandonment into the arm which supports her, and is leaning against the man's body, her head—in its round automobile straw-bonnet—upon his shoulder in an attitude which suggests at once that she is making the most of an opportunity and that she is not much hurt. This the man seems aware of. He is about thirty years of age; good-looking with, when he speaks, an expansive smile. This—for all his Irish face and blue eyes—has a flashing radiance that is Italian in its penetrating brightness. His complexion, too, is of a warm reddish brown,

R U S T

suggesting an Italian parent. His ample mouth has an expression of mingled brutality and tenderness. He is dressed in a suit of shepherd's plaid with yellow negligee shirt and shoes; and out of his breast pocket protrudes carefully the corner of a lavender handkerchief which matches his tie and socks. His get-up, though conspicuously that of a better class commercial traveler, shows signs of native taste, and even in its loud key, is not unattractive. His voice and manner are sufficiently prefigured by his appearance—both are loud, hearty, aggressive and frank. He is a distinctly engaging specimen of a successful second generation immigrant; and, though both ladies are of a much higher type than any with whom he has ever been in intimate contact before, he shows neither awkwardness nor constraint. The girl whose eyes have been closed opens them as she gets in the doorway.)

JUDITH (*Turning and seeing them*): Oh!
(*Running to her*) Jessica!

JESSICA (*Limply, holding out her hand*): I'm all right.

JUDITH (*Taking her arm and supporting her down to the center of stage, together with the man who limps slightly*): Are you hurt? Jessica!

JESSICA (*Smiling with gentle pathos*): Pretty—well—shaken—up. (*She pulls herself together cautiously. The moment the man is liberated he leans heavily on the back of the wicker*

R U S T

armchair near which they stop, and raises his right foot from the ground.)

JUDITH: But you're all right? Nothing broken?

THE MAN (*Cheerily*): Oh, she's all O. K. She just caved in as we got out of the car.

JUDITH: The car? Where?

THE MAN: Just outside. Down in the road.

JUDITH (*Indicating Jessica's torn duster*): But there was an accident?.

THE MAN (*Grinning*): Well, if you'd seen my car!

JUDITH: Which car?

THE MAN: Mine. Smashed to smithereens.

JUDITH: But Jessica?

THE MAN: Oh, she was all right. We came back in hers. She was fine and dandy till we started to get out. Then all of a sudden she slumped.

JESSICA (*Fearing her share of the accident is being lightly dismissed*): The thought of it all overpowered me. He might have killed himself to save me!

THE MAN (*With pleasant derision*): Fudge! Had to get out of the way, didn't I? And I didn't have time to see anybody. So you didn't cut any ice.

JESSICA (*A trifle dampened*): But I would have if you'd seen me. It's just the same.

THE MAN: Oh, well, I'd have smashed just the same. And it saved your car.

R U S T

JUDITH: Perhaps you'd better tell me about it later. Better go and lie down now.

JESSICA (*Emotionally*): No, it's just the nervous reaction. It quiets me to tell about it. You see, something gave out in the car.

JUDITH: Which car?

JESSICA: My car. The Browns' car. And we got stuck in the road just where there was a curve. The man was out seeing what was the matter. When suddenly around the curve came a toot, and then another car. The man—my man—heard the toot and jumped just in time. Jumped and left me there. And the other car, his car—oh!

THE MAN: I found the stone wall all right.

JESSICA: Yes! Rather than run me down—a helpless woman sitting in a dead car—without a second's hesitation he swerved to the left and smashed madly against the stone wall. Such a smash! I shall never forget it! And as he smashed he jumped. Oh, it was heroic! Thank you, Mr. —— (*She seizes his hand dramatically.*)

THE MAN (*Perfectly at ease but amused*): Don't mention it. You see, aiming for the wall gave me a longer time to jump. Martini's my name. (*He takes from his pocket a book of business cards such as drummers use and tears off one, and hands it across to Judith.*)

JUDITH (*Reading*): Barney Martini.

BARNEY (*Nodding*): Real estate.

R U S T

JUDITH: But I don't understand. How did you get back?

BARNEY: We left the chauffure to see that nobody ran away with the junk and came back in the other one.

JESSICA: Yes. Mr. Martini was in a hurry. Said he couldn't stop a moment. But in spite of it, when I was overcome at the vivid recollection of it all—he helped me into the club so gently.

MISS E. (*Bustling in*): My child, Jessica! (*To Judith*) I had a premonition that stopped me just as Mr. Bradley-Stone took me by the arm. Oh, my child, I knew something was the matter. Are you hurt?

JESSICA (*Limply, with a return to her gentle pathetic smile*): Pretty—well—shaken—up.

MISS E.: I'm sure you have an internal shock. You are so high-strung. Come at once and lie down.

JUDITH: Yes, perhaps you'd better.

JESSICA (*Allowing herself to be drawn away by Miss E.*): But I shall see you again? You will not go? Perhaps Mrs. Allison will ask you to—I mean—I *must* have a chance to thank you properly. And there's your car, you know. You smashed it to save my life.

BARNEY: Just the front of it, that's all right.

JESSICA: But we must pay for it.

MISS E. (*Chirruping suddenly*): Pay for it?

JESSICA: Yes, he smashed it for me.

MISS E. (*Briskly*): You must not agitate

R U S T

yourself, dear. You are getting hysterical already. Come, lie down at once. (*She hustles her out.*)

JESSICA (*Calling as she goes*): Keep him, please, Mrs. Allison.

JUDITH: I don't know how we're ever to thank you, Mr. Martini.

BARNEY: That's all right. (*Looking at his watch*) I guess I've got to beat it. I've got a date.

JUDITH: But how shall we see you again?

BARNEY: You've got my business address.

JUDITH: But can't we do something now? Send for your car, for instance.

BARNEY: Well, say, guess that chauffure's getting homesick. You might just put it in cold storage till I can look it over. Excuse me now, I've got to beat it. Give my regards to the young lady? Ain't it funny how she slumped? Glad to have the pleasure of meeting you. (*Shaking hands cordially*) And hope to have the honor again. Excuse my hasty skipping, won't you? (*He starts to go, walks about two steps, and slumps over into wicker chair*) Oh! (*Sitting, he throws his head back and quietly faints.*)

JUDITH: Mr. Martini! (*She runs to him*) He's fainted. (*She strikes the bell on the nearest table, runs to the screen door, opens it and puts a chair against it. Coming back, she quickly undoes his tie and unbuttons his collar. The waiter comes to the door.*) Some whisky. And ice water.

R U S T

THE WAITER: Yes, madam. (*He goes hastily.*)

JUDITH (*She looks around the room, spies the newspaper and uses it as a fan. She fans him with regular unflurried sweeps until the waiter returns. He has a glass of whisky and one of water. She takes the whisky, dips her handkerchief into it, and moistens Barney's lips*): Wet a cloth and put it on his forehead.

THE WAITER: Yes, madam. (*He starts for the cloth.*)

JUDITH (*Pulling the handkerchief from Barney's breast pocket*): Take this! (*The waiter wets it from the glass of ice water while she keeps on moistening his lips. Having folded it into a bandage, he is about to place it on Barney's forehead, when some slight stir on Barney's face is noticed by Judith*) Ah!

BARNEY (*Opening his eyes*): What's the matter?

JUDITH (*Handing him the whisky*): You fainted. Take this.

BARNEY (*Takes it and drinks it down. The waiter takes the glass from him*): I—what—?

JUDITH: Fainted.

BARNEY (*In feeble disgust*): Well, what do you know about that?

JUDITH (*To the waiter*): All right.

THE WAITER: Yes, madam. (*He goes.*)

BARNEY (*Anxiously*): How long was I in it?

JUDITH (*Smiling*): Not so long.

R U S T

BARNEY (*With decision*): I got to go. (*He half rises and sits again*) Oh!

JUDITH: Where are you hurt?

BARNEY: My ankle.

JUDITH: Here. (*She brings a chair*) Put it up. (*He does so*) And all that time you had your weight on it!

BARNEY (*Grinning*): And hers. She ain't the bantam she looks, either.

JUDITH: I wonder you didn't faint before.

BARNEY (*Taking down his foot*): Say, I got to go!

JUDITH (*Knowing that he can't*): Well, stand up and see.

BARNEY (*Rising, sits immediately*): Holy mackerel!

JUDITH: You see, the blood rushes down. Put it up.

BARNEY (*Putting it up*): Say, a thing like that can play ball with you, can't it?

JUDITH (*Nodding*): We've got to send for a doctor at once and get it bandaged.

BARNEY: Nix on that. I'm going if I crawl.

JUDITH: Is it anything I can do?

BARNEY (*Doggedly, looking at his watch*): If I ain't there by one o'clock I lose out.

JUDITH: Where?

BARNEY: Mike Hawley's saloon. Where the road goes down to the marshes. About three miles from here.

JUDITH: You couldn't do it now even if you had two feet. Can't you telephone?

R U S T

BARNEY: Sure, if I can get to one.

JUDITH: Here. (*She pulls over the little table with the phone. But the wire is too short by ten feet to reach him.*)

BARNEY: That's easy. (*He rises as she gets to the back of the chair to push it over. He inadvertently steps on his foot again and wincing with the pain sits.*) Gee! I haven't time to go flopping again.

JUDITH: Can't I do it? (*She runs back to the table.*)

BARNEY: Sure. (*He looks at her eagerly with a frank smile.*) Say, don't get mussy now if I ask you something. Can you keep your mouth shut?

JUDITH: Yes.

BARNEY (*Approvingly*): Guess you can. And I'd trust you, anyway. I wouldn't trust the other one around the corner. She's on the q. t. all right, but she'd always be playing tag with you.

JUDITH: What shall I say?

BARNEY: Call up Main 320 Party J. (*Doubtfully*) Wait a minute. (*He decides*) All right.

JUDITH (*In phone*): Main 320, Party J.

BARNEY (*Noticing his tie and collar*) Say, how did that happen?

JUDITH: I did it when you fainted.

BARNEY (*Much pleased, but feeling foolish*): Go on! (*He begins to fix them.*)

JUDITH: Hello!

BARNEY: Say you want to speak to Mike.

R U S T

JUDITH: Hello, I want to speak to Mr. Hawley. (*To Barney*) He says he's Mike.

BARNEY: Ask him if Bud Wheeler's there to have him come to the phone.

JUDITH: If Bud Wheeler is there, have him come to the phone, please. (*Hastily*) Oh! He says Bud's just out and he can't be running round after him all day. (*In the phone*) Just a minute, please.

BARNEY: He thinks you're Central. Jolly him up a bit.

JUDITH: How?

BARNEY: Say you're a friend of his and you always thought he knew how to treat a lady.

JUDITH (*In the phone*): Is that the way you treat a friend of yours? I thought you would do anything for a lady. (*A little hastily*) Oh, thank you, but I'm in a hurry now. If you go get him, I'll speak to you afterwards.

BARNEY (*Admiringly*): Say, you'll get by all right.

JUDITH: He's gone outside for him.

BARNEY: That's the stuff. I was scared stiff Wheeler wouldn't wait. Tell him I'm tied up here and can't get down. Say if he's in the same mind he was this morning, I'll get the hundred to him in half an hour. Don't tell him who you are.

JUDITH (*Soberly*): I won't.

BARNEY: He's one of those suspicious ones. If he knew who you were it might start him thinking.

R U S T

JUDITH: Hello! Yes, I'm talking for Mr. Martini. He's had an accident. Yes, in his car and can't come. He says if you're in the same mind he will get the hundred to you in half an hour. What? (*To Barney, covering the receiver with her hand*) He says he won't wait longer than half an hour as he can go to the other fellow. And he says you must make it one-fifty.

BARNEY (*Excitedly*): I'll be damned if I will! (*He half rises and sinks again with pain.*)

JUDITH: Mr. Martini says he won't consider it at all. Yes, he is right here in the room. What? Well, I'm his nurse.

BARNEY (*Chuckling*): Good. (*Grumbling*) I'll see him further first. One-fifty on a mere chance!

JUDITH (*To Barney*): He says it's one-fifty or it's all off.

BARNEY (*Hotly*): He does! (*He takes up the wet handkerchief bandage which the waiter has left on the arm of the chair and wrings a few drops of water out of it viciously*) Gee! if I could only get at him! I'm giving him the hundred as it is. Tell him he stands to lose a thousand on the offer.

JUDITH (*In the phone, getting more and more interested*): Very well, if you're willing to lose a thousand for the sake of the extra fifty. Mr. Martini says there's another man ready to talk business with him, and his offer suits him as

R U S T

well as yours. Shall I tell him that's your last word?

BARNEY: Stop! don't say that. Leave us a chance to crawl. Oh! (*He slaps his hand violently with the handkerchief.*)

JUDITH: Hold the wire. I've got to attend to my patient. One of his bandages is loose. (*She puts down the receiver.*)

BARNEY (*In amazement*): What's that for?

JUDITH (*Vitally alive*): Quick! If I'm to land him I've got to know something about this man. Who is he and what's the deal?

BARNEY: He's had an offer of two thousand for some marsh land. I don't know whether I want it, or not, but it's a pretty shrewd firm. I offered him one hundred bonus down for a six months' option at three thousand.

JUDITH: What sort of man is he?

BARNEY: A pig-headed fool!

JUDITH (*Impatiently*): Yes, yes! I mean is he used to ready money?

BARNEY: Never had a hundred at a whack in all his life.

JUDITH: Many business dealings?

BARNEY: Credit at the grocery.

JUDITH: Will the other man pay him cash down?

BARNEY: A hayseed like that? Give him an installment and tie him up with paper.

JUDITH: I see. (*After a moment of speculation she goes to the phone*) Hello, this Mr. Wheeler? Now, Mr. Wheeler, I can't have my

R U S T

patient bothered any more. He's feverish and likely to get worse. We must settle this right now. As I see it, you get a hundred dollars' bonus, cash right in your hand and clear profit. If Mr. Martini finds the property can't be developed, you're just that much in. And you've still got your chance with the other man. That is, of course, if he really means business now, and isn't just going to tie you up and make you lose this offer to no purpose. It's nothing to me, only I can't have my patient bothered any longer. Will you take a doubtful sale for two thousand now and wait till you get in? Or three thousand in six months at the latest and one hundred dollars clear bonus in your hand to seal the bargain? (*She waits*) Very well. You stay where you are and he'll send somebody down at once. (*She hangs up the receiver quickly and rises with sparkling eyes*) He'll take it.

BARNEY: Gee, you're a winner!

JUDITH (*Walking around in excitement*): Now we must send at once before he weakens.

BARNEY: Sure. (*He hesitates a moment and then grins frankly*) I owe you just fifty plunks for that. Can you lend it to me till I get to town?

JUDITH: What?

BARNEY: Honest, I ain't got but fifty in my jeans. I didn't expect he'd bite so soon. That's the reason I left him this morning—to raise it at the hotel. No trouble getting it on that. (*He*

R U S T

takes off his large gold watch and massive chain.)

JUDITH: Perhaps not. But we can't waste the time. Here you are. (*She takes out fifty dollars from her bag and gives it to him.*)

BARNEY (*Putting his fifty with it*): Co-rect.

JUDITH: Now you've got to write out something for him to sign.

BARNEY (*Taking a paper from his pocket*): Always go armed. (*Rising*) Do you think I can do it?

JUDITH: Certainly not.

BARNEY: Who'll we get to go?

JUDITH: I was thinking.

BARNEY (*Cunningly*): Got to be somebody who can talk him over in case he's weakened. Be a pity to lose all that fine work of yours.

JUDITH (*Calculating*): Half an hour would do it. No one here yet. (*To him*) I'll go.

BARNEY: Say, you're a corker.

JUDITH (*In excitement*): Give them to me. (*He gives her the paper, the money, and the watch and chain*) I don't want this.

BARNEY: Sure. I'm hocking it.

JUDITH (*Holding it out to him*): Take it.

BARNEY (*Putting his hands in his pockets*): If you don't, the deal's off. We haven't any time to waste.

JUDITH: All right. (*She sweeps the money, the paper and the watch into her bag.*)

BARNEY: Don't forget the witness.

JUDITH: I'll get my friend Mike.

R U S T

THE WAITER (*Appearing at door*): Lunch is served, madam.

JUDITH: We must wait until Mr. Allison and the others come. Tell Miss Ewing this gentleman will explain. And put on another plate.

THE WAITER: Yes, madam. (*He goes.*)

JUDITH: Tell her to ring up the doctor at once. I've gone to deliver a message for you. And don't get mussy if I ask you something—can you keep your mouth shut?

BARNEY (*With a grin*): Sure.

JUDITH (*Hurrying out center door as the curtain falls*): Good-by!

ACT TWO

ACT II.

(*A month later. The scene is the living room at the Allison's. A large and handsome room into which—in the back at the left—a circular flight of steps comes down. Under the curve of the stairway is the main door of the house. At the bottom into the curve of the steps is set a semi-circular bench made to fit it. The stairs and the hallway into which they come project outward from the main part of the room. This is lighted by two windows in the back wall and by a third one in the wall at the right. All of these open on the large piazza which surrounds the house. In the left wall below the stairway is a door and lower still, next to the audience, a fireplace with projecting chimney breast. Well to right center is a table. The chairs and other furnishings are handsome and substantial; and while partly of a summer type, are a cross between those of a country and those of a city house.*)

Miss Ewing, Jessica, and Dodd are discovered. Miss Ewing is at the table, on which lie open several pamphlets and paper-backed

R U S T

reports, together with an open box of water-colors. From the latter she is, with constant reference to the pamphlets, applying little dots of color to a large white map of India, on an easel to her right. Jessica is embroidering in a chair left front. Dodd is seated above and to the left side of the table reading the newspaper. The windows and door are open to a July afternoon.)

MISS E. (*Reading from a pamphlet on the table over which she is bending*): The Presbyterian Mission at Delhi. (*Turning to map*) Where is Delhi? Oh, here. What color are the Presbyterians? Oh, yes, burnt sienna. (*She dots Delhi with her brush.*)

JESSICA: Aunt, you have some green paint at the corner of your mouth.

MISS E.: It's only water color.

JESSICA: But it's not in the least becoming. Is it, Colonel? (*Dodd looks up from his paper*) The paint?

MISS E. (*Smiling with superior understanding at him*): You don't mind, do you, Colonel?

DODD: I rather like a patch of brown paint on the lips. Especially in the service of humanity. (*Getting up and looking at her work*) That's a splendid map of India. No silly shadings.

MISS E.: I had it made to order, cost twenty-five dollars.

DODD: Rather steep.

MISS E.: Not when you know. I'm dotting

R U S T

it with all the foreign missions in India, each in its different color. So that I may see at a glance what foundation I have to work upon.

DODD: But I thought you didn't believe in foreign missions.

MISS E.: They collect excellent statistics of matters the natives wish to conceal.

DODD: But I thought they didn't wish to conceal enough. The Esquimaux ladies, I mean.

JESSICA: Oh, the petticoats. That's ancient history now. Isn't it, Aunt?

DODD: Dear me! what happened?

JESSICA: Nothing, they wouldn't wear them.

MISS E.: On account of racial prejudice I was forced to leave the Esquimaux to the slower process of evolution.

DODD: Dear me! Think of the American missionary with all those petticoats on his hands! And what is this project?

MISS E.: Suttee.

JESSICA: Widows burning themselves over their husbands' bodies, you know.

MISS E.: Both the natives and the government claim the awful practice is stamped out. But I am credibly informed it still persists secretly.

DODD: And the missions?

MISS E.: They ferret out all that's going on, you know. I shall write each one separately and put all the evidence together. Then I shall have a scientific basis to work upon. You see now this map is well worth the money.

R U S T

DODD: Quite so. And after you get the information, how will you proceed? To keep the widows from wishing to make bonfires of themselves.

MISS E. Oh, Colonel, how can you speak so lightly?

JESSICA: Aunt, you are making a pun.

MISS E. (*Indignantly*): I am not! (*Seeing it*) Oh! go on with your frivolous embroidery.

JESSICA (*To Dodd as he goes over and stands by her*): A centerpiece for the dinner table. (*She holds it under his chin.*) Don't you think it will be of service to mankind? And it's prettier than a messy map of Indian missions.

DODD: Anything which keeps people busy is beautiful. Especially when it's pretty.

MISS E.: But when you can advance civilization, to take up with trifles! Methodist mission at Chunderabbadad. Methodists are vermilion. (*About to dot the map*) Oh, there's a fly! (*She sticks the brush crosswise in her mouth and folding the Colonel's newspaper into a bat pursues the fly cautiously*) It's the duty of every citizen to kill flies. Their feet are full of typhoid germs.

JESSICA: Would you make red or yellow stems, Colonel?

DODD: Why not green?

JESSICA: Green stems are so ordinary.

DODD: Split the difference then. Try brown. (*He picks up a skein of silk.*)

JESSICA: That's red!

R U S T

DODD (*Dropping it suddenly*): Oh! so it is.

JESSICA: Why, you are color-blind!

DODD (*After a moment in a queer voice*): Dear me! yes. (*He goes to his seat and begins reading the paper.*)

JESSICA: Isn't it interesting, Aunt? The Colonel is color-blind.

MISS E. (*Absently, still pursuing the fly*): What a pity, what a pity! (*To Dodd as she stealthily darts towards him*) Just a moment, Colonel. He's on you. (*Slapping it in triumph*) There! Excuse me.

DODD: Not at all. I'm in the business myself.

MISS E.: You kill flies, too?

DODD: Yes, that is my principal occupation in life.

MISS E. (*Apologetically*): And I thought you did nothing but read the paper!

JESSICA: But how interesting to be color-blind. (*The Colonel gets up and walks away*) Do all colors look alike?

DODD (*Still in his queer voice*): Only red and green.

JESSICA: That isn't so bad.

DODD (*As if to himself*): But—they happen to be signal colors.

MISS E. (*Chirruping*): Then how could you be in the Army?

DODD (*After a moment*): That's why I had to get out.

MISS E. (*Seeing she has said something unfortunate*): Oh, I beg your pardon! (*Anxious*)

R U S T

to make amends) I thought you were much too young to retire.

DODD (*After a moment with a bright change of manner*): And then after a while I became a professional bug-killer—an entomologist. When you can't do one thing, you can always find another—in two or three years.

JESSICA (*Observing his curious intonation*): And what did you do in those two or three years?

DODD (*Surveying her whimsically as if intending she shall see her impertinence*): A lot of foolish things.

JESSICA (*Persisting*) How interesting. What?

DODD (*Coolly*): Well, my dear, for one thing I came near marrying a young lady like you. Only she was a Filipino.

MISS E. (*Shocked*): Oh! I'm glad you took to killing bugs instead.

DODD: Dear me, thank you!

(*Enter by door at back Mrs. Bradley-Stone, followed by her husband.*)

MRS. B.: Good afternoon. (*Sam nods to every one.*) So nice having you at Judith's, Miss Ewing. Such a round of calls as I have, and I can do you both at once. I'm sure you're more than delighted, aren't you, Sam? Yes, he says he is. Didn't you hear him say he's more than delighted?

SAM: Aw, cut it out!

R U S T

MISS E. (*Having piled up her pamphlets, she takes up her easel and map*): Excuse me a moment.

MRS. B.: What's that?

MISS E. (*Suggestively*): I will tell you when it's finished. Then I hope you will be very much interested. (*She goes left, carrying them out.*)

MRS. B.: Do you hear that, Sam? It's another one of those get-civilized-quick schemes. I told you what would happen if you bought any of those Esquimaux petticoats. Much better buy us some, Jessica. Well, Colonel, have you forgiven me yet?"

DODD: I don't think so. For what?

MRS. B.: Getting on the Board of Directors instead of Judith. But I hope you won't think that you've joined for nothing. Come to me with your grievances.

DODD: There's a little trifle on my mind now. I wish you'd have the clubhouse moved.

MRS. B. (*Suspiciously, thinking he is jesting with her*): Moved?

DODD: Nearer the water. I don't golf and I do paddle.

MRS. B.: Are you serious, or making fun of me?

DODD: Very serious. Besides, I don't believe in taxation without representation. Half of our lady members don't play golf.

MRS. B. (*Thoughtfully*): That's an idea.

DODD (*As Miss Ewing enters*): Take Miss

R U S T

Ewing here. You don't play golf, do you, Miss Ewing?

MISS E. (*Majestically*): Still frivolous, Colonel?

DODD: But you don't, do you?

MISS E.: I do not.

DODD: Nor you, Miss Jessica. But you like to paddle round, don't you? I mean of course in the water.

JESSICA: Very much. Some one was saying the other day what a pity he couldn't take me canoeing. Mr. Martini.

MRS. B.: Mr. Martini? Of course that lunch couldn't be helped—that is, without more social experience than Judith possesses. But fancy her allowing him to call!

MISS E.: What else could she do? After Jessica and I came here to visit. He called to refuse to let us mend his automobile. It was very handsome of him.

JESSICA: You forget, Mrs. Bradley-Stone, that I owe him my life.

MISS E.: Under Providence, of course. But we certainly owe him for repairs. So what could we do?

MRS. B.: But fancy hobnobbing with that sort of man!

MISS E. (*With a shade of warmth*): No one hobnobs with me without my consent.

JUDITH (*Entering door left*): Tea on the back porch. Miss Ewing, will you serve? How do you do, Mr. Bradley-Stone. (*Shaking hands*

R U S T

with him) What time do you want us to start to-morrow morning? Too bad we have to motor so far to the yacht. How convenient it would be if we could have a good yacht club of our own. (*Miss Ewing and Dodd go out, Jessica is following*) By the way, you don't mind if we bring Mr. Martini along? (*Jessica stops.*)

MRS. B. (*Coming up briskly*): Mr. Martini!

JUDITH: Yes. He's at the hotel for the weekend and was to lunch here to-morrow.

MRS. B.: He seems to have the luncheon habit.

JUDITH (*Sweetly*): Yes. And you see it would be awkward.

MRS. B.: Aren't we getting home in time for a late lunch, dear?

SAM: Ordered the lunch yourself this morning. (*To Judith*) Bring him along.

JESSICA (*Triumphantly*): Can't I give you a cup of tea, Mr. Bradley-Stone? (*He follows her out.*)

JUDITH: I *am* so sorry. But you see the position I'm in. Can't we make it some other day?

MRS. B.: And have Sam sulking for a week? Really, Judith, you must have a yellow streak—to put up with riff-raff like that. It's outrageous the way you're foisting that man on us.

JUDITH: I know. But you always said I couldn't get rid of people.

MRS. B. (*Impatiently*): Can't you see the way I manage it? You can do anything if you just smile sweetly while you're doing it.

R U S T

JUDITH: But you have a positive gift. I couldn't carry it off so well.

MRS. B. (*Not quite sure she isn't being made fun of*): Well, I admit it takes practice. And you've got to be sure of your gown. (*Smoothing her gown*) How do you like it? To-morrow I'll send you a check for it.

JUDITH: No—the money, please.

MRS. B.: Judith, you're a Jew! You just like to *feel* it.

JUDITH: Sam might see the check and ask questions.

MRS. B.: Sam? He never bothers with my bank account except to deposit his beggarly allowance every month. When there is any.

JUDITH: He doesn't seem to mind advancing. (*She turns away and looks at her watch.*)

MRS. B.: I bet he wants to get me in a hole—and then make his own terms. And think of the money the stingy thing spends on that yacht.

JUDITH: And then to have to keep it way off there.

MRS. B.: I wish I'd drawn your husband. (*Suddenly*) You mean to say he doesn't even ask why you are spending so much money on clothes all at once?

JUDITH: He's always delighted when I buy things.

MRS. B.: You wouldn't like him to know? What's to hinder my pocketing this gown and daring you to do your worst?

R U S T

JUDITH (*Sweetly*): Because there's that lace gown you want next.

MRS. B.: Jew! Well, it's your own business. If you're willing to order me gowns and sell them ten per cent. off, I don't know why I shouldn't take advantage of it. But it's shameful the way you're deceiving him.

JUDITH: You should have thought of that before you asked me to do it.

MRS. B.: I? Well, I believe you put it into my head, anyway. And buying that hat of yours showed me what a cinch it would be. But what on earth are you doing with the money?

JUDITH (*Mockingly*): I am a miser. I just like to feel of it. (*She turns away and looks at her watch again.*)

MRS. B.: You're up to something. I think you're a natural-born schemer. Pity your husband wouldn't let you manage the club.

JUDITH: Yes. Are you managing it?

MRS. B. (*With careful carelessness*): What do you think of moving the club down to the water?

JUDITH (*As if surprised*): Well, you *are* waking up that sleepy Board of Directors!

MRS. B.: What do you think of it?

JUDITH: I doubt if you could put it through.

MRS. B. (*Complacently*): I generally get what I want. And if you'd join your influence with mine—

JUDITH: I should have to think about that. It would be nice if we could find a good beach

R U S T

near by, so that you could use part of the golf links and save expense.

MRS. B. (*Loftily*): Oh, the club doesn't think as much about saving expense as you do. But I suppose it would cost a good deal.

JUDITH: As to that—you could sell the old property to good advantage. And there's some marsh-land right next to us which could be easily drained. I remember thinking the other day what an excellent beach was going to waste there. But you'll never get the club to change. Though it would be a great feather in your cap.

MRS. B.: Want to bet I couldn't put it through?

JUDITH: Yes. I bet you that lace gown. If you win, you take it without a cent—if you lose, you pay the full price.

MRS. B.: Done. I take you.

JUDITH: But Miss Ewing's waiting to give you a cup of tea.

MRS. B. (*As she goes*): Aren't you coming?

JUDITH: In a moment. (*Mrs. B. exits by door left.*) That makes the fifteen hundred. (*She goes into the hallway by the stairs.*

After a moment Barney enters by the back door, which is open. He is still smartly dressed in commercial traveler style, but his suit of brown and his tie and shirt of yellow make a somewhat less striking combination. His manner is full of adoring respect, though it has lost nothing of its brisk frank heartiness. Their attitude to

R U S T

each other is that of two people who have an understanding.)

JUDITH (*Seeing him off*): Ah!

BARNEY (*Advancing and shaking hands with her cordially*): How are we to-day, huh?

JUDITH: Now listen, Mr. Martini. Business first, for I may not have another chance. You're to go with us on the Bradley-Stones' yacht to-morrow.

BARNEY: Gee! I am?

JUDITH: That's why I telegraphed you to come out to-night. And don't forget you were to lunch with us to-morrow.

BARNEY (*More delighted*): With you! I was?

JUDITH (*With a slight shade of embarrassment*): Yes. That's why they invited you.

BARNEY (*Disappointed*): Then you didn't ask me?

JUDITH (*Fearing she has hurt him*): We'll make it some other Sunday. But I particularly wanted you to go with the Bradley-Stones to-morrow. I'm afraid she'll be a little—a little difficult.

BARNEY (*Grinning*): Oh, I don't mind.

JUDITH: He'll be all right. Be awfully interested in his yacht.

BARNEY (*Gaily*): I'll tell him it's the greatest ever.

JUDITH: Did you close the deal? With my friend Wheeler?

BARNEY: Just closed it—tight as wax. But

R U S T

say, I was weakening on that till I got your tip. (*Anxiously*) You're sure it looks good? I'm a little strapped just now with other things.

JUDITH (*Eagerly, seeing an opening she had expected to contrive*): Suppose I lend you the money?

BARNEY (*Pleased, but not forgetting his native shrewdness*): Go on! I ain't so strapped as all that. But it's awfully good of you.

JUDITH: I got the refusal from Wheeler. And now on my advice you have taken up the option. Of course I shouldn't want you to lose anything through me.

BARNEY (*With a shrewd grin*): Guess it's safe enough if you're willing to lend on it.

JUDITH: But it's a speculation all the same. And it must be handled very carefully. From the inside.

BARNEY (*Indulgently, seeing what she is driving at*): And you're the one that's got to do it? I might put my foot in it?

JUDITH: Well, yes, you might.

BARNEY (*Enjoying the situation*): I don't see how your lending me the money's going to cut any ice.

JUDITH: It would give me a hand in it.

BARNEY: Come off. You're the only one that's got a hand in it until you turn the trick. I tell you one thing—you can't lend me a cent more.

JUDITH: More?

BARNEY: Ain't you got my watch in hock?

R U S T

JUDITH: Ridiculous! I'll have to charge you storage if you don't redeem it.

BARNEY (*Jocularly*): Can't afford it. When you're rushing me into these large deals! (*Taking out a cheap nickel watch*) One plunk. Don't dare pull it out in office hours for fear I'll hurt me credit.

JUDITH: Then I'll give it to you and you can pay when you like.

BARNEY: No, you won't.

JUDITH: Why?

BARNEY: I do business on the level—with friends. You keep the watch, see? Until I can scrape up enough to redeem it.

JUDITH: But why be so silly?

BARNEY (*Suddenly*): You want to know? (*With the adoration of a child*) Because I like to think you've got it. Tucked away somewhere in your belongings—something I used to wear. (*More lightly*) Gives you that warm feeling—like a dinner with five courses of wine.

JUDITH (*Lightly but a little taken aback*): No sentiment in business.

BARNEY (*Jocularly*): It's business to let you keep the watch, ain't it, and me have the use of the money? You ain't said anything about interest.

JUDITH: Well, what of this loan? I want to make it.

BARNEY: Why?

JUDITH: I told you—to have a stake.

BARNEY: I asked you how that was going to

R U S T

do it. You've got all the stake you want. You've got the trumps.

JUDITH: Now, Mr. Martini, we must settle this before we go on. And we're wasting time.

BARNEY: It's your time you're wasting, not mine.

JUDITH: What do you mean?

BARNEY: Come out with the goods. Lending me that money ain't what you're after.

JUDITH (*Evading*): I just want to keep in the game, that's all.

BARNEY: What do you suppose I hocked you that watch for? I ain't in the habit of forcing security down a person's throat. Do you think I did it because I was brought up in the Y. M. C. A.? It was because I wanted you in the game. Now state your proposition.

JUDITH: I'd like to buy a half interest in the property.

BARNEY (*Without surprise*): Now you're talking. Sure!

JUDITH (*Surprised*): Did you expect it?

BARNEY: Sure. The moment you sprung that loan of yours I was on. I'm tickled to death to have you.

JUDITH: But you don't need me—now it's started.

BARNEY: Good! It's started, is it?

JUDITH: Yes. Mrs. Bradley-Stone is one of the Directors of the club. After you gave me that idea I dropped a few words around, and now she's keen on it. All we've got to do is to

R U S T

let her push it. And when the time comes show her that the most desirable shore front is your property.

BARNEY: *Our* property.

JUDITH: Only of course I'm not to appear in it. You can make me out a personal statement.

BARNEY: Well, what else?

JUDITH (*Surprised*): That's all.

BARNEY: You could have told me that five minutes ago—without all this shenanigan. What was it you didn't want to waste time about?

JUDITH (*Confused*): Why—

BARNEY (*Slowly, simply, and respectfully*): You wanted to get it settled before you told me. You wanted to be sure I wouldn't give you the go-by. (*Judith starts to speak.*) Oh, that's good business. I'd do it myself—to anyone else. I don't suppose there's any reason you should know right off like this that it's different with you. But did you really put that up to me? Didn't you know I *wanted* you in? That I haven't been thinking about anything else since that day? To have you and me in something together is the biggest thing ever happened to me.

JUDITH (*Confused and touched*): Why—how could I know?

BARNEY: Well, you know now. (*Regretfully.*) And—and I kind of hoped you'd guess. Don't you think for a moment I ain't on the level

R U S T

with you. I'd as soon think of cheating my mother.

JUDITH (*Extending her hand, feeling that he has paid her the greatest tribute he knows*): Thank you.

BARNEY (*Taking it in the same spirit; then more lightly—not at all ashamed of his emotion, but with a healthy man's desire to get out of it when it's over*): And if I did, she'd have basted the hide off me back. It's eyes like a gimlet she had and the fine walloping hand. God make her bed in heaven! Any members of your club in real estate?

JUDITH (*Somewhat startled at the sudden shift*): Real estate? No. Why?

BARNEY: What are you going to do with it when you get out?

JUDITH: I haven't thought so far.

BARNEY: Now you're in the business you'll have to learn. We're always rushing to catch up to year after next. You might turn it my way, huh? Our way, huh? Or perhaps a little swap with something down might be an inducement. What's the matter with throwing out a tickler?

JUDITH (*Catching fire*): Yes, why not? We've always kept the people away before. But if we move, it doesn't matter.

BARNEY: Turn the house into a hotel and knock spots out of the other one. Cut the ground up into building lots—put up a pergola, and the thing's done.

R U S T

JUDITH: A pergola?

BARNEY: Ain't nothing develops a piece of property like a pergola. Catches them like flies. Two brick gate posts and a pergola will sell a sandpile. Call it a terrace and it's the milkman and papa commuting in six months. People have got to live and why not live classy at the same price? Say, what's the matter with getting the post office there? That will open up the whole thing.

JUDITH (*With enthusiasm*): The post office? Good. It's awfully out of the way now. And so is the station. But we kept them there on purpose, so that the people wouldn't come in.

BARNEY: It's the ir-resistible and it would make. (*Very glibly*) The fine grounds of the exclusive Pequot Country Club are cut up into choice building lots and known as Pequot Terrace. Sixty-seven minutes from Times Square. Sunday opening day, free transportation both ways and prospective buyers met at the station by our gentlemanly agent. Property zealously guarded and the nucleus of an intellectual neighborhood already assured. Say, we might give away one or two of the job-lots to college professors. That would fetch them in droves and when they saw the pergola, it's all over but the shearing. But we got to get that post office.

JUDITH: Let's move the old one over, then. Nobody uses it but ourselves, anyway. How could we go to work to move it?

BARNEY: Get a petition to Washington. If

R U S T

you've got any influential friends ready-made it's easy. If you haven't, we can make some. (*He slaps his pocket.*)

JUDITH: Oh!

BARNEY: It don't cost much.

JUDITH: But bribing—

BARNEY: Fudge! You don't suppose a man's going to work up steam without coaling? We ain't built that way ourselves—you and I—are we? And say, you'd be surprised to find how few hods will get a move on. Through a congressman's the best way. But you'll have to work that up for me. I'm all right on Albany, but I'm short on Hartford. You spot 'em and I'll spit 'em. Especially if there's any Eytalians. Get that going, will you?

JUDITH (*Her imagination fired by this large vista*): But how?

BARNEY: How? (*He winks at her.*) How'd you cook up this business of moving the club, huh?

JUDITH (*Demurely*): By dropping a few words in the right quarter.

BARNEY (*With cordial admiration*): I knew when I saw you all you wanted was to give your mind something to chew on. Gee, there was a good real estate man lost in you! Get on to yourself and you'll be a hummer.

(*Enter Mrs. Bradley-Stone, followed in a moment by Miss Ewing, Jessica and Sam.*)

MRS. B. (*Before she comes into view*): Well, Judith, you might have had a cup of tea with us.

R U S T

(*In the doorway, seeing Barney*) Oh! (*Cat-tily*) I understand.

BARNEY (*Coming forward cordially*): How are we to-day, huh?

MRS. B. (*Distantly*): Thank you.

MISS E. (*With dignified courtesy of just the right blend to one who is inferior, but to whom she is under obligations*): How do you do, Mr. Martini?

JESSICA (*Following her, comes forward quickly and lays her hand in his*): Oh, Mr. Martini, you're not too late for some tea. Come along.

BARNEY: Thanks. But tea and I don't agree.

JESSICA (*Pouting coquettishly*): Not when I pour it for you?

BARNEY: Sure not. It would go to my head all the quicker. (*Jessica goes to her former seat and resumes her embroidery.*)

SAM: Hello, Martini! I want you——(*He stops and, turning to Judith, winks; then he calls to his wife elaborately.*) My dear, here's Mr. Martini now.

MRS. B. (*Icily, divining his intention to annoy her*): So I see.

SAM: Didn't you say something about wanting him to go to-morrow? (*He sits triumphantly.*)

MRS. B. (*With bland insolence*): About wanting him? Indeed? I had forgotten it. Mr. Martini, Mr. Bradley-Stone will be happy to include you in his invitation to the Allisons. Mrs.

R U S T

Allison said she had overlooked the fact that you were lunching with her to-morrow.

JUDITH (*Sweetly*): I really said, Mr. Martini, that I had an embarrassment of riches.

BARNEY (*Suavely*): Always relieve an embarrassment when I can; don't you, Mrs. Bradley-Stone? I shall be happy to lunch with Mrs. Allison on Mr. Bradley-Stone's yacht. You are very kind to ask me.

MRS. B. (*Perceiving after a moment that he has neatly landed her one*): I? Not at all.

JUDITH (*Seeking for something to say*): Why have you left Uncle Harry all alone?

MISS E.: He said he'd go over to the hotel.

JUDITH (*Laughing*): He's always going over to the hotel.

BARNEY: Make a good horse's neck there.

JUDITH: No, it's flies he's interested in.

BARNEY: Some of those there, too.

JUDITH: He's been all over the world studying how to exterminate them.

JESSICA: How interesting about his leaving the army. (JUDITH *stares at her in blank amazement.*) His color-blindness.

JUDITH: Interesting! How did you know?

JESSICA: He told us.

JUDITH: Told you!

JESSICA: That is, I found out and asked him.

JUDITH (*Aghast*): You *asked* him! I thought he couldn't have spoken of it. He has never mentioned it even to me. Is it possible that he—told you how it happened?

R U S T

MISS E.: No.

JESSICA (*Not to be put off*): How?

JUDITH (*Gravely, after a moment*): I will tell you. And you will see what any reference to it or his army life means to him. It was in the Philippines and they were out on an expedition. In an emergency he was transferred to the Signal Corps. He put up—the wrong light. A detachment of ten men—nine soldiers and a corporal—went to their death.

BARNEY: Gee!

SAM (*Rising suddenly*): By Jove!

MRS. B. (*Interested only in the story*): The poor fellow! What happened then?

JUDITH: Then—he went out of his mind for a while and when he recovered they had retired him. I suppose it was a merciful thing to do. Even if he had been detailed where his color-blindness would not have been dangerous, he would always have known that the whole Army knew. He was wrapped up in the Army and he was in the prime of life—the very midst of his career!

JESSICA: He went all to pieces he said.

JUDITH (*In amazement*): He said!

JESSICA: Yes, he came near marrying a Filipino woman.

MISS E. (*Shocked*): Jessica!

JUDITH: It took him three years to get over it. To pull himself together to start again. He went away somewhere and fought it out. As well as we knew him, he never spoke of it to

R U S T

my father or to me. Of the tragedy or the darker days that followed it. The Army was a closed book. He even tried to give up the "Colonel," but it stuck to him. (*Under her breath.*) So you see now why you must never mention it. (*Much stirred by her narrative, she goes up and out of the back door.*)

MRS. B. (*Impatient of the hush which has fallen*): Now we all have the mullygrubs. Break it, somebody. (*Her glance falling on Barney, she determines to badger him.*) Mr. Martini, you might give us your history, too.

BARNEY (*Divining her intention, gets ready for her*): Sure I might! Would you like the ex-pur-gated edition?

MRS. B.: You might tell us why your name is Italian when——

BARNEY (*Very Irish*): Me mug is Hibernian? Sure, that's in the ex-pur-gated edition. I take me mug from me mother and me name from me father. He was Napolitano and she hailed from "The Ould Sod."

MRS. B.: Really? A strange mixture.

BARNEY: It was congenial interest did it. She was a cook and he had a fruit and vegetable emporium. They fell in love trying to beat each other down. That's what makes me such a successful business man.

MRS. B.: And you have other characteristics of theirs, I suppose?

BARNEY: Yes, I speak three languages. New York, Irish, and Neapolitan. But the accents of

R U S T

me childhood arise only when I'm angry. And generally I'm as mild as a lamb and will eat out of your hand.

MISS E. (*Much interested*): They're so absorbing—these new American types.

BARNEY: We're all new when it comes to that. We all came over once, didn't we?

MISS E.: My ancestors on both sides came in the Mayflower.

BARNEY: Sure, I've read it carried nothing but steerage. But you're not ashamed of them, are you?

MISS E.: I should think not!

BARNEY: I bet mine paid more passage money. And they'll both be ancestors some day. Yours had the start of mine, but it took you longer to get going.

JESSICA: How was that, Mr. Martini?

BARNEY: They were English. In one generation the Irish owned New York. I thought of being a policeman myself.

MRS. B.: Real estate, I think some one told me. Quite a rise from a banana cart.

BARNEY: Me first love for the soil came by way of boots. Then I was an office boy and got it in me lungs. Sweeping out a Long Island development company. When I saw what a con it was, I set up for meself. Since then I moved three times. And now I am the elegant possessor of an office, with mission furniture. Next year I break into Broadway.

R U S T

MRS. B.: And the year after into society, doubtless.

BARNEY (*Grinning genially, with charming audacity*): Sure I mount to the top with a bound when I go yachting with Mr. Bradley-Stone as the guest of Mrs. Allison, and Mrs. Bradley-Stone begins to inquire into me an-te-cedents. It's a sad woman me poor ould mither would be this day. "Barney," she would say, "me poverino gossoon! It's me that worked for them and I know them. Keep out of society."

MRS. B. (*Who has been amused in spite of herself*): Well, we must be going, Miss Ewing. (*Severely*) Where is Judith?

MISS E.: You'll find her in the garden probably.

MRS. B.: We've had such an unusually charming time. Especially Sam, who likes this sort of thing. Haven't you had a charming time, dear? Yes, he says he has. Didn't you hear him say he's had a charming time? (*She goes.*)

SAM (*Following her*): Aw, cut it out!

JESSICA: How Mrs. Allison worships the Colonel!

BARNEY: She's the finest woman ever wore shoe leather.

JESSICA: Yes, I adore her.

MISS E.: Think of all that tragedy! And he can smile and joke! Perhaps that's what makes him a little—well, according to my Boston notions—a little indelicate in his language.

R U S T

JESSICA: And how worked up she got. She is generally so calm.

MISS E.: I've often thought if she had a fault, it was a slight lack of vital interest. You remember I spoke of it, Jessica, at the beginning of the summer.

JESSICA: Yes, Aunt, you speak of it with everybody.

MISS E.: And now she seems really waking up at last. Soon I shall even hope to get her interested in philanthropy. Oh, Jessica, how I dread seeing you grow up with no projects for humanity on your mind.

JESSICA: But meanwhile you must take your nap. You know you're going out this evening.

MISS E.: So I am. (*She glances out into the garden—not at all desirous of leaving Barney with Jessica.*) But I'm not at all sleepy.

JESSICA (*Firmly*): Aunt, you told me this morning to be sure to make you lie down before dinner.

MISS E.: I suppose I should husband my strength. (*She goes and looking over the stair rail calls out*) Judith!

JESSICA (*Rising*): Do you want her, Aunt?

MISS E. (*A little flurried*): No-o. (*She goes up the steps.*)

JESSICA (*Having followed her as far as the stairs, she turns to Barney. He is looking forward very gingerly to the prospect of a tête-à-tête. She comes quickly to him and takes something from the bosom of her gown*): Here.

R U S T

BARNEY (*Taking it awkwardly, seeing from her manner it is a gift*): What you want me to do with it?

JESSICA: It's a locket I had made for you. As a remembrance of that day. To wear on your watch chain.

BARNEY (*Eagerly seizing the pretext*): But I haven't got any watch chain. See. (*He exposes his waistcoat.*)

JESSICA: What a splendid chest! You had one that day.

BARNEY: When?

JESSICA (*Alluringly*): The day I lay in your arms. I felt it. The day you saved my life and smashed your car.

BARNEY: Well, I lost my watch that day, too.

JESSICA: That's something else I owe you. Perhaps I shall pay everything—some time.

BARNEY (*Taking alarm at her tone*): Oh, fudge!

JESSICA: I had it made just for you. And carried it here—where my heart was beating under it. I almost hated to give it to you. I liked to feel it there so.

BARNEY (*Reminded of his speech to Mrs. Allison, he is all the more disgusted*): Ah, go on! If you had a typewriter to plug, you wouldn't have time to listen to your heart beating.

JESSICA (*Disappointed at his reception of it*): Don't you want to open it?

R U S T

BARNEY: My father used to say—Curiosity killed a cat.

JESSICA: You're stupid, aren't you?

BARNEY: My father used to say—it's the stupid ones live longest. (*Winking at her knowingly.*) I'm good for ninety.

JESSICA (*Softly*): Open it and see what's in it.

BARNEY (*Nervously*): I've got to see Mrs. Allison a minute. Guess I'll find her in the garden.

JESSICA (*Piqued*): Well, there's one thing you might know at any rate. Mrs. Allison wouldn't want to be seen alone with you.

BARNEY (*Indignantly*): Why not?

JESSICA: People would talk.

BARNEY (*Truculently*): What are you driving at?

JESSICA: They'd say the finest woman that ever wore shoe leather ought to be looked after by her husband.

BARNEY (*Good-humoredly*): Oh, all that rot! I suppose you mean I'm not her sort.

JESSICA: Of course that would attract attention first. But afterwards they'd see—(*She stops.*)

BARNEY (*Defiantly*): What?

JESSICA: What anyone with a pair of eyes could see. That you adore her.

BARNEY: Sure I do. Angels were meant to be adored.

R U S T

JESSICA (*Sharply*): And are making very un-angelic love to her.

BARNEY: Say, you'd better drop that.

JESSICA: Well, aren't you?

BARNEY (*Disgusted*): Oh, back up!

JESSICA: Even if you're not, aren't you ashamed to be making her—a married woman—fall in love with you?

BARNEY: With me! Get another transfer.

JESSICA: Other people are noticing it, too. You just heard my aunt say how changed she was and interested.

BARNEY: What are you trying to do? Jolly me?

JESSICA: You know well enough you are magnetic to women.

BARNEY (*Feeling like a fool*): Quit your stringing.

JESSICA (*Invitingly*): You could make any woman think you were making love to her.

BARNEY: Have you thought I was making love to you?

JESSICA: Haven't you been?

BARNEY: Go on! When I've been dodging you?

JESSICA: But you knew I knew it was because you've been afraid——

BARNEY (*Contemptuously*): Afraid of what!

JESSICA: That I would be silly and not know how to manage it. Yet when you get a chance you don't know enough to take it. Why didn't

R U S T

you come out on the porch for some tea? They had all gone and we would have been alone.

BARNEY: Well, we are now. Aren't we?

JESSICA (*Softly*): Yes.

BARNEY: And you don't see me doing anything.

JESSICA (*With a sidelong glance*): But being stupid.

BARNEY (*Good-humoredly staving her off*): Say, if you look at me like that, you'll make me leave home. You're a little fool talking that way. Suppose I was to take you up.

JESSICA: Why don't you?

BARNEY: Because I ain't a fool if you are.

JESSICA: You think so, do you? Do you suppose anybody guesses that—that we are talking like this? People needn't know everything that's going on. If that's what you're thinking of you'll never get into a scrape on my account. I've got more to look out for than you have. And I know how to manage things, Mr. Barney Martini.

BARNEY (*Roughly*): Aren't you afraid to be talking to me like this? How do you know I can?

JESSICA: Oh, I've been sizing you up.

BARNEY (*Coolly*): I'll tell you one thing you don't know, my young lady—enough to fool with me. You'd better run home and play with your dolls. Girls down my way don't talk like that unless they mean something.

R U S T

JESSICA: Why don't you find out whether I do or not?

BARNEY: Well, I'll be blowed!

JESSICA: I'll give you the chance. I'm coming to town Monday on the ten o'clock train.

BARNEY (*Jocularly*): Hope you won't get nervous on the way. Shouldn't want you flopping over on my hands again.

JESSICA: That's another thing I'm old enough to know.

BARNEY: What?

JESSICA: Just when to faint.

BARNEY: Well, I'll be ——!

JESSICA: Some one is coming. (*She sits and picks up her embroidery again.*)

(*Enter Judith and Nicholas by back door. He has just come from town.*)

NICHOLAS (*In the doorway*): My dear, you should take a sunshade when you go out. And I hardly like you to walk alone.

JUDITH: I just ran over to the hotel—to see Uncle Harry a moment.

NICHOLAS: But there are always tramps about. (*She has taken his hat and holds it in her hand.*) Ah, Jessica!

JESSICA (*Rising*): Mr. Allison. Just from business?

JUDITH: Mr. Martini, Nicholas.

NICHOLAS (*Shaking hands*): How do you do, Mr. Martini?

BARNEY (*Heartily*): How are we to-day, huh?

R U S T

Just going, Mrs. Allison. Was afraid I'd have to run away before you got back.

JUDITH: Good-bye. We'll pick you up at ten to-morrow.

BARNEY: Sure, I'll be on deck. (*He exits.*)
(*Jessica takes up her embroidery and goes by door left.*)

NICHOLAS: My dear, pardon me for mentioning it. But do you think it's just right for Jessica to be alone with that young fellow? She's so inexperienced, you know. Of course, I know we can hardly help it occasionally after what happened—but he's scarcely the thing.

JUDITH: I left her aunt with them.

NICHOLAS: But what is this about picking him up to-morrow morning?

JUDITH: The Bradley-Stones have invited him yachting.

NICHOLAS (*Astonished*): The Bradley-Stones!

JUDITH: Yes. You see he was lunching here (*In reply to his look of surprise.*) Miss Ewing is still going over that smashed automobile, you know. Besides it seems hardly decent—considering what they owe him—not to show him some courtesy.

NICHOLAS: Oh, he's well enough—good American stuff. I have no narrow old-fashioned notions, but of course we know nothing about him. And I don't need to remind my tactful wife that there are always complications.

JUDITH: No.

R U S T

NICHOLAS (*Sitting and taking out the paper*): Excuse me. I want to look at these quotations a minute.

JUDITH (*After twirling his hat a moment, she sits down. She has the air of having come to a decision to speak to him of something on her mind*): Do you know you and I are settling into an old married couple, Nicholas?

NICHOLAS (*Absently*): Yes, dear. Just a moment. (*He looks up and smiles at her.*) Now.

JUDITH: I said that you and I are settling into an old married couple.

NICHOLAS (*Tenderly*): Why not?

JUDITH: You remember when we talked over my giving up father's firm. I asked you to let me keep it——

NICHOLAS (*Interrupting indulgently*): As if I married you to have you go on working.

JUDITH: I asked you then to let me keep it—until other responsibilities came.

NICHOLAS: I remember that was one of your dear foolish notions. Am I not busy enough for the two of us?

JUDITH: That's just why I said we were growing into an old married couple. You are so absorbed—and—when there are no children a busy husband seems to have so little in common with his wife. Why, you got off this morning without kissing me good-bye.

NICHOLAS: Did I? I'm sorry. I had something on my mind. The last few days I've been

R U S T

figuring out how to confront an unusual combination.

JUDITH: Yes, I knew it. I was crazy to help you.

NICHOLAS: Thank you, my dear. But it would have given you a headache. We shan't clutter up that dear head of yours with figures or anything else. It has had enough of that. The rest of your life you can spend figuring out what will show it off best.

JUDITH: I came near coming into town this morning.

NICHOLAS: More hats?

JUDITH: To tell you, you had forgotten something.

NICHOLAS: To kiss you good-bye? How very dear of you to think of it!

JUDITH: And to tell you something else. (*After a moment.*) How would you have liked that?

NICHOLAS: I am always glad to see you, my dear. But I must own that this morning I shouldn't have had many minutes. Just enough for a forgotten kiss perhaps, and one for interest. We were making things hum this morning. Busy as bees.

JUDITH (*Eagerly*): What did you do?

NICHOLAS: There was a glorious scrimmage.

JUDITH (*Rising and coming to him*): What happened?

NICHOLAS (*Rising and pinching her ear af-*

R U S T

fectionately) : We laid up some more honey for the drone.

JUDITH : Oh! (*She turns away impatiently. Then turns back again with the same eagerness.*) Tell me about it.

NICHOLAS (*Playfully as to a child*) : I never bring business home with me.

JUDITH (*After a pause, in a steady, even tone*) : What do you bring home with you, Nicholas?

NICHOLAS (*Puzzled*) : My dear, what a question! Everything in the world I think you might want. Including myself.

JUDITH (*Still in the same tone*) : Yourself? What is yourself?

NICHOLAS (*Smiling as a father might to a child who has asked an obvious question, but one that is perplexing to answer*) : Why—it's all of me.

JUDITH : Do you bring home your thoughts, your interests, your problems? Anything that occupies your mind? Your mind is yourself.

NICHOLAS (*With tender reproach*) : My wife should know that my heart is myself.

JUDITH : Your heart? Well, we will take that, then. Do you bring home sympathy,—friendship,—union?

NICHOLAS (*In troubled surprise*) : My dear, have you found me lacking in any of these? I bring home to you love—and confidence—and—(*Somewhat at a loss for a word and a little ashamed that he must make a protestation*) and

R U S T

happiness that you are here to make my home beautiful with your presence.

JUDITH (*Gently*): All these you might bring to a child—if we had one. And courtesy and kindness and tender consideration—all these you might bring to a valued servant. But I am not a child to be satisfied merely with petting—or a servant merely to be graciously treated and paid his wages.

NICHOLAS (*Alarmed*): My dear, what is it? Do I not give you everything you want?

JUDITH (*A little wildly*): Give, give, always give!

NICHOLAS (*With simple dignity*): I thought that was what love meant—giving. I am eager to anticipate your least desire. I married you because I wanted to shield and protect you from every care and trouble. It is my constant joy to serve you.

JUDITH: To serve? My idea of loving is not to serve but to share. What do I really share of yours? Answer me that.

NICHOLAS (*Nonplussed*): Why, all that is mine. My house, my goods, my—

JUDITH: So does any guest that your roof may shelter. We sit together at meal times, eat and drink together—so do they. Of an evening we chat, go out together, read side by side—so do they. But what interest of yours do I really share? Or you of mine?

NICHOLAS (*Wounded*): My dear, that is unfair and a bit unkind. You know I always make

R U S T

a point of asking you what you have done. The rides you have taken. The people you have seen, and the—the novels you have read. Do I not in short go over the entire day with you?

JUDITH: My day? My endless absorbing day. (*She laughs a little hysterically.*) I was speaking of interests.

NICHOLAS: You positively alarm me, Judith. Am I to suspect that you are not interested in your position, your home?

JUDITH: My home! The housekeeper runs it. As for the rest, it is a daily career of momentous decisions. Shall I take my morning ride up the road or down the road? Or perhaps not ride at all.

NICHOLAS (*Interrupting*): Now, my dear, I have always insisted on your riding every day.

JUDITH (*Going on*): Shall I wear this gown or another? Shall I have somebody to luncheon or lunch alone? Shall I take tea at the Chamberlains' or at the Williamses'? If it is cool shall I sit on the front porch in the sun? If it is warm shall I sit on the back porch in the shade? Shall I re-arrange my bureau drawers? Can I possibly have my hair done again this week? Is there any new book to read, any new thing to do? Here is another useless hour, how shall I throttle it? While you—you are making things. Having a glorious scrimmage. Even when I ask you what it is, you put me off with a smile. "Oh, you have been as busy as a bee—laying up honey for the drone." The drone! I was not

R U S T

born a drone. Who has made me one? As for your honey, I am drowning in it. You have smeared my wings with it when I want to stretch them and go to work!

NICHOLAS (*Aghast at this outbreak*): Judith! Oh, this modern malady of unrest! And you of all women for it to fasten on!

JUDITH (*With difficulty, coming down from her excitement*): Poor Nicholas, I am sorry! But if I could only make you understand how weary I am of buttoning and unbuttoning. How would you like to tell your time by hooks and eyes? If you could only know how meagre my life is and how I long to share yours!

NICHOLAS (*Relieved at her touch of humor and delighted to find she is becoming more sane*): But, my dear, my life is somewhat hot and dusty, and I find yours pleasant and comfortable. I only wish I could have more of it with you.

JUDITH (*Despairingly*): Can't you understand that this life of mine—which pleases you so as a change—is all I have! And how much of it do you see? One day in the week and a few short hours in the evening.

NICHOLAS (*Consolingly*): Well, my dear, I will try to come home a little earlier.

JUDITH (*Bursting into hysterical laughter*): It is useless, useless!

NICHOLAS (*Expostulating*): My dear, my dear!

JUDITH (*Suddenly*): You never asked me

R U S T

what it was I wanted to see you about this morning.

NICHOLAS: Yes, I did—the good-bye kiss at breakfast.

JUDITH: But the other thing?

NICHOLAS (*Smiling*): We have been so tempestuous, I forgot it. But if it was anything like—like our present conversation—I am tempted to own I am almost glad you didn't come. It would be very distracting to have you whirling about in business hours. And I shouldn't wish anyone to have heard you laughing like that in my office. Was it anything you wanted?

JUDITH: No. Only to tell you something. But the time has gone by for it now. (*A gong strikes.*) There goes the dressing gong. At any rate I have the advantage of you in dressing. You have only one suit to put on.

NICHOLAS: My dear, you sometimes puzzle me. What do you mean now?

JUDITH: While I may bring my whole mind and intellect to grapple with the problem before me. Shall it be the green, or the blue, or the pink, or the black, or the lilac, or the gray—

NICHOLAS (*Playfully as to a child*): My dear, are you going on forever like this?

JUDITH (*Quietly*): That is what I have often asked myself. That is what I was going to ask you this morning—when I told you something. That is what it is now too late to ask you or myself or anyone. Because I have already answered.

R U S T

NICHOLAS (*Indulgently*): Judith, I swear I don't understand a word of what you're saying.

JUDITH: No. That's the reason I decided not to speak about it. (*Going up the stairs.*) Don't be late to dinner, dear.

CURTAIN.

ACT THREE

ACT III.

(*After dinner at Mrs. Allison's the last of September. Same Scene. Sam and Miss Ewing are discovered. Both are in evening dress. Miss Ewing is in her customary black, but her gown is more severely elegant than ever. Sam, rooted in a spot before the fireplace, is standing with his hands thrust in his pockets in an attitude of bored resignation.*)

MISS E.: You and I are on time anyway.

SAM: Past ten. Sweet hour for a rural party.

MISS E.: The last of the summer festivities. Thank Heaven!

SAM (*Growling*): Then come the winter ones. Begin later, last longer. Sweet life!

MISS E.: What a treadmill! Do you go back to town at once from here?

SAM (*Nodding*): Here between houses.

MISS E.: Between?

SAM (*Nods, then jerking his thumb upwards*): Neat idea of hers. Wanted to take in this shebang—had to open in town for the next one. Shuts up the shop, bundles off the servants to get the other place going, and we roost at the Allisons' for a week.

R U S T

MISS E. (*Sighing*): All that energy going to waste! Nothing done for humanity!

SAM (*Jerking his thumb back towards the end of the mantel*): Mail for you there.

MISS E.: Oh, is there? I wondered why I got none at dinner. (*She goes to get it.*)

SAM: Yours, ain't it?

MISS E. (*Picking up several letters*): Yes.

SAM: Supposed you were the Society for the Improvement of the Condition of Chinese Women.

MISS E.: Yes, people don't think you are responsible unless you are a Society. Nice substantial name, isn't it? Nothing faddy.

SAM: Name's all right. You never struck me for that other subscription. That Butt-in business.

MISS E.: Butt-in? Oh, Suttee you mean. Well, the fact is I found I had to give up that. It's dreadful to think of women burning themselves alive at their husbands' funerals and know you are powerless to prevent them.

SAM: How's that?

MISS E.: Both the Indian government and the Missions wrote most indifferent letters and a swami in Bombay sent me a pert and almost insolent reply. Said he understood that in spite of the law people sometimes committed suicide even in this country. So what could I, one woman, do against all that apathy. But the Suttee subscriptions are being transferred to the funds of my present Society.

R U S T

SAM: What's that for?

MISS E.: The mutilation of Chinese women's feet. We shall print things. Show by charts, you know, just what happens to the nervous system—when the feet are not permitted to develop. I am credibly informed by a chiropodist—no—that's not the word, a pedologist—that the whole interior harmony of the body is deranged. Besides, how ungraceful it is! I'm sure you will want to help.

SAM (*Taking out some bills*): Well, here's your fifty.

MISS E. (*Taking them*): Oh, thank you. But possibly you might want to examine into my literature—before you subscribe.

SAM: All the same to me. Hindoo widows or Chinese feet.

MISS E. (*Appreciatively*): You have confidence in me. Thank you so much. You won't mind my seeing if there are any other subscriptions here, while we're waiting. (*She begins to tear open the envelopes hastily and peek in each one.*)

SAM: Longer we wait, sooner we'll be back.

MISS E. (*With delight*): One, two!—oh, here are two letters by special delivery!

SAM: Got to catch you before you hear from China.

MISS E. (*Busy with her letters*): Subscriptions both of them. I have struck the popular chord at last! (*Triumphantly.*) All of them subscriptions! It must be the colored chart of

R U S T

the nervous system. Americans are so absorbed just now in their insides.

(*Dodd enters by door left. He has on evening clothes, a light coat, and a straw hat. Under his arm he carries a bundle of pamphlets and in the same hand a dress suit case which he sets down very carefully.*)

MISS E.: Ah, Colonel!

DODD: Came in the back way. Cross lots from the hotel.

SAM: What have you got there?

DODD: My workshop and papers. Don't suppose I'd trust them in my trunk? I'm all packed up ready to come to breakfast. Hotel closes at 8 a. m. sharp.

MISS E.: Why on earth didn't you arrange to sleep here to-night?

DODD (*Whimsically*): Well, you see—the proprieties must be observed. A young and single man can't be visiting Judith until her husband gets back.

MISS E.: Why, Colonel, how delicate! But Mr. Bradley-Stone is here.

DODD (*Looking at Sam drolly*): I should call him very much married.

SAM (*Snorting*): Huh!

MISS E. (*Indicating bag*): Oh, do let me see it. I'm so interested in science. All my projects—if I do say so—are thoroughly grounded on bed rock. You know he kills flies, Mr. Bradley-Stone? Nasty typhoid things!

DODD: Well, I haven't got to killing them yet.

R U S T

I'm only trying to find something else to kill them.

MISS E.: Oh, tell me about it, do!

DODD: I warn you, Miss Ewing, not to set me going. Besides, there's the party.

SAM: Looks like waiting all night for the ladies. And don't mind me.

DODD: Well, you see, Miss Ewing, an up-to-date entomologist is a developer of enemies. Bug against bug, you know. Even if all the people in the world went around benevolently slapping flies like you, it wouldn't make much headway toward extermination. Nature is so prolific, you know—in things we don't want. (*Miss E. is a trifle shocked.*) But if we can find a parasite—some little insect which we can train to lay its eggs on the body of the fly—then the problem is solved. The boarders will, as it were, eat up the boarding-house.

MISS E. (*In a superior manner but with an evident desire not to wound his feelings*): Isn't that a trifle—fanciful?

DODD: Perhaps so. We haven't yet found a parasite we can coax to change his diet. But there is the case of the ragweed weevil, you know.

MISS E. (*Chirruping*): The ragweed weevil?

DODD: The bug that eats ragweed. And there is a tiny insect which lays its eggs on him—when he isn't looking, you know. Now, nobody cares how much ragweed is chewed up, but we do care how much cotton is destroyed by the

R U S T

cotton boll weevil. So a bright man thought if all the ragweed weevils were killed off, the tiny lady with the eggs might be made to take to the cotton boll weevil for a boarding-house. Thus, just about egg-laying time—— (*Miss E. is more and more shocked.*)

MISS E.: Oh!

DODD: All the ragweed was cut down and the ragweed weevils all died of starvation. The little parasite was forced to deposit its egg in the cotton boll weevil. When the eggs hatched, the weevils got pains in their tummies and turned up their toes. And half the cotton crop which they had expected to chew up was saved.

MISS E.: But—but—isn't that interfering with the ways of Providence?

DODD: Dear me, I suppose it is! (*Pretending to think it out, he concludes triumphantly.*) But so is a man when he plants cotton, you know.

MISS E.: But destroying a whole race of insects! It seems presumptuous. (*A little flurried, conscious of an apparent weakness in her position.*) While to slap them one by one is surely what Heaven intended us to do!

DODD: I trust you will continue to slap them! Although we have scoured the world, we haven't yet found a little mother who will let her children feed on flies.

MISS E.: I should think not. The nasty things!

JUDITH (*Appearing at the head of stairs in*

R U S T

evening dress): You don't mean to say I'm not the last. (*She comes down.*)

SAM (*Growling pleasantly*): Huh, that's her specialty! Have to get up early in the morning to be later than Mrs. Samuel Bradley-Stone.

JUDITH: Brought your traps over I see, Uncle Harry. You haven't changed your stubborn old mind? I must tell the housekeeper about your bed.

DODD: Couldn't forsake the hotel. The last night, you know.

MISS E.: That's his work. He's been telling us all about it. So interesting—but a little irreverent for my old-fashioned notions. (*To him.*) But don't you find it in your way? Your color-bli—(*She stops appalled, as both Judith and Sam dart an apprehensive glance at the Colonel.*)

DODD (*After a moment*): Dear me! Yes.

MISS E. (*Hastily, and much flustered*): I'd better take these upstairs and put them away. (*She holds up the money and the letters.*) Just think, Judith, dear. The box is filling up. (*Going up the stairs.*) I never had so much money before for any of my projects.

JUDITH: She got over a thousand dollars for the petticoats. And more for the Suttee. *Where* do you suppose it all comes from!

SAM: Fools.

JUDITH: And such ridiculous schemes!

DODD (*Quaintly*): They show an original and independent mind.

JUDITH: But they're so exquisitely useless.

R U S T

DODD: Oh, I don't know. It's a good thing for women to keep busy.

JUDITH (*Warmly*): Uncle Harry, you're laughing at us. You know men are not so silly.

DODD (*Drolly*): How about alchemy and squaring the circle? And perpetual motion?

JUDITH: But that was long ago. People are grown up now.

DODD: My dear. If you can tell me anything more exquisitely useless than spending hundreds of lives and millions of dollars discovering the North Pole—I should like to hear it.

SAM: Waiting for your wife.

MRS. B. (*Appearing at the top of the steps. She has on a lace gown. Miss Ewing follows her*): What's that? Slanging your wife as usual! (*They come down.*) Next week I shall be going to three in an evening. How will you like that?

SAM: Can't be late to all of them!

MRS. B. (*With a sweet smile*): Judith, I should think you'd die here all winter! Nothing to do.

JUDITH (*As sweetly*): Nicholas likes the simple life.

MRS. B.: I should insist on my husband's living in town.

SAM: Glad to. Keep away from home more.

MRS. B. (*Coming to him at the fireplace—from which he has never moved during entire scene—and chucking him irritatingly under the chin*): But you wouldn't let wee wifey go to par-

R U S T

ties alone—like Nicholas—would you, dear? No, he says he wouldn't. Didn't you hear him *say* he wouldn't?

SAM (*Moving away a step*): Aw, cut it out!

MISS E. (*Of Mrs. B.'s gown*): What beautiful lace!

MRS. B.: Yes, I won it on a bet, didn't I, Judith? (*Following her husband.*) And he does think wifey is so cute to get him a yacht club of his very own and move the old one down to the water—all with her sweet wifely arms. Don't you think that's cute? Yes, he says he does——

SAM: Well, do we get this over or don't we?

JUDITH: I suppose we ought to be starting.

MISS E.: But Jessica!

MRS. B. (*Impatiently*): You don't mean to say we've got to wait for Jessica?

MISS E.: She has decided to put on another gown.

SAM: Sweet life!

JUDITH: She can come with us. We can't all go over at once, you know.

MRS. B. (*Sweetly*): How do you get along with only one small car, Judith?

JUDITH (*Sweetly*): It is inconvenient. Do you mind coming back, Mr. Bradley-Stone?

SAM (*Enthusiastically*): Great! Another half hour gone.

JUDITH: Then you can take them over now. The three of them.

DODD: Dear me! (*Indicating his suit case.*) Couldn't leave my plates stacked up this way.

R U S T

JUDITH: I've got the nicest den for you—just off the library. Come, I'll show it to you. (*She goes right.*)

DODD (*Picking up his things and following*): Good!

(*Miss Ewing carefully puts on her veil over her high piled white hair and ties it under her chin like a nun's cap. Mrs. Bradley-Stone lifts up the lid of the bench by the stairs and takes out her shoes.*)

MRS. B.: Sam. (*He comes and puts on her shoes. When he is finished she puts on an automobile veil and does up her head in it in the same manner as Miss Ewing. While Sam, having got his hat and coat from the settle, stands waiting impatiently*): Who's Jessica dressing for to-night? Never any young men at that place.

MISS E. (*A little shocked*): Of all things! I've brought her up in the way she should go.

MRS. B.: I knew a girl who was brought up that way. And away she went.

MISS E.: I regret deeply she has no projects on her mind. But I'm sure she has no men there.

MRS. B.: Don't tell me a girl takes an hour in dressing unless she has men on her mind.

SAM (*Snorting*): Huh!

MRS. B. (*Warmly*): You know very well, Sam, I dress for women. But Jessica hasn't got on to the necessity for that at her age.

MISS E. (*Hesitatingly*): Well, the fact is—I

R U S T

dislike to speak of it before an unmarried man like the Colonel—but she broke her stay-strings. (*Sighing.*) She will lace too tight.

SAM (*Casually*): Strap the feet in China.

MISS E. (*Majestically*): How can you compare them! (*Complacently conscious of her own well-kept proportions.*) Certainly our racial idea of the feminine figure is both correct and graceful. Lacing with discretion does not derange the nervous system. And though I don't like to speak of such things, I am credibly informed that even men should wear them. For physiological reasons it would be indelicate to discuss. (*She goes to the door and opens it.*)

MRS. B. (*To Sam*): She'll begin a campaign on that next. But perhaps people wouldn't subscribe for anything so near home.

MISS E. (*Calling outside*): Why, Mr. Martini! (*Calling inside.*) Here's Mr. Martini.

MRS. B. (*To Sam*): That dago Mick!

MISS E. (*To Barney, who appears at the door in evening clothes*): Are you going with us to the party?

BARNEY: Not been asked.

MRS. B. (*To Sam*): Well, I was going to say if Judith had dragged him there!

SAM (*Snorting*): You and he are as thick as thieves.

MRS. B. (*Witheringly*): Only in business. (*Sweetly as Barney comes forward.*) Good evening, Mr. Martini.

R U S T

BARNEY: How are we to-night, huh?

MRS. B.: Your last week-end. Too bad the hotel's closing.

BARNEY: They'll keep me on. Got to have an eye on filling in the marsh, you know. Expect to be running in and out all the time.

MRS. B.: Then it's nice for you that the Allison's are here right along. Suppose you'll be dropping into lunch occasionally?

SAM (*Disgusted with her*): Are we going or aren't we? (*He goes up to Miss Ewing.*)

MRS. B. (*To Barney in a lower tone*): May have something to tell you to-night. (*Louder.*) You'll excuse us, Mr. Martini? Though I suppose you came to see Mrs. Allison. (*Going up.*) It's not an interesting party, anyway. Good night. (*The three exit.*)

BARNEY (*Alone. He walks about, comes to table and takes up a little leather-bound book—opens to fly-leaf and reads*): "Judith Allison, her book." (*Repeating, lingering on the words.*) Judith Allison, her book. (*Looking around to see again if he is alone, he raises it reverently to his lips.*) Sure, that can't hurt you, Madonna mia!

JESSICA (*Appearing at top of stairs—her straw automobile bonnet hanging by its coquettish ribbons from her arm*): Tired of waiting? (*She cannot see him on account of the projection.*)

BARNEY (*Under his breath*): Och, the devil! (*He looks around the room and, realizing that he is in for another tête-à-tête, he tiptoes to the*

R U S T

upper right corner of the room, and stands by window curtain, seeking to hide.)

JESSICA (*Coming down*): Why, where are they all? (*She comes out into the room. Barney, lifting the curtain slightly, tries to squeeze in under it. She sees him and is alarmed.*) Oh!

BARNEY (*Urbanely, as he comes out*): How are we to-night, huh?

JESSICA (*Surprised*): What were you doing there?

BARNEY (*Very Irish*): Com-muning with nayture.

JESSICA: Where are they all?

BARNEY: Gone to the party.

JESSICA: And left me alone?

BARNEY: They've gone, fast enough.

JESSICA: And left me with you? Quite alone!

BARNEY (*Taking fright at her tone*): Sure, you will be in a minute. (*Making for the door.*) Good night.

JESSICA: Come here. I want to speak to you.

BARNEY (*Coming sheepishly*): What is it you want?

JESSICA: Why haven't you tried to see me before?

BARNEY (*Drolly*): Sure, I was so scared me tongue clove to the roof of me mouth.

JESSICA (*Severely*): What have you got to say for yourself?

BARNEY: Not a stivver.

JESSICA: I don't believe you ever went near the station.

R U S T

BARNEY (*As if surprised*): Sure I did. And a man buttonholed me. Didn't I write you!

JESSICA (*Scornfully*): After I wrote you! As if you couldn't get rid of a man!

BARNEY: Sure, they're easy. Just tell them you've got a girl on hand. But you didn't want me to tell him that, did you? He'd be after watching to see who you were.

JESSICA: I wish I knew whether you're lying or not. I think you're making a fool of me.

BARNEY: The shoe ain't on the other foot?

JESSICA (*Taking a new tack*): I never saw you in evening clothes before.

BARNEY (*Strutting with frank vanity*): Nor I. Just had 'em made. Like me?

JESSICA: Splendid. What a fine chest you have. You look like a modern cave-man.

BARNEY: Like a what?

JESSICA: A man who would drag a woman off to his cave.

BARNEY (*Dodging the suggestion*): It's the mighty liar I am.

JESSICA: Did you expect to see me here tonight? Is that why you wore them?

BARNEY: Got to get used to them. Now I'm coming out in society.

JESSICA (*With a sudden idea*): That's what it is! You want to get to know people—now you've made a beginning. And you're afraid it would be a break.

BARNEY (*Puzzled*): What?

R U S T

JESSICA: That's why you didn't meet me. Why you have avoided me.

BARNEY (*Jocularly*): Sure, that's the reason. It's the bright guesser, the likes of you.

JESSICA: You weren't so stupid after all. But you didn't think far enough. I could help you.

BARNEY: A girl like you? Then my name would be Dennis.

JESSICA: Oh, you can do lots of things without people knowing it. (*Meaningly.*) That's what I'm always telling you.

BARNEY (*Taking alarm at her tone, but nevertheless entertaining the idea*): You'd put your foot in it.

JESSICA (*Indignantly*): Oh, would I? I can take you to this party to-night and it would seem as if it just happened. I could plan out lots of things for you, and nobody would guess. Do you suppose that's all my mind's good for—making center-pieces? A girl's got to do something tame and domestic. But always when I'm embroidering—I'm planning, dreaming, making pictures in my head.

BARNEY (*Slightly*): What of?

JESSICA (*Alluringly, but with humor*): Of stupid men with big chests. And how I could help them get what they wanted—and people wouldn't know I was doing it. When he's a politician I get votes and lobby for him. When he's in Wall Street I ferret out secrets for him. But yours is the best dream of any! Because you're all in the making. And—and you're

R U S T

rough, and straight from the shoulder—and a cave-man. (*Softly.*) Don't you want me to try?

BARNEY (*Shrewdly—not willing to lose her services, but desirous of keeping himself free from any entanglement*): I'm afraid you'd be balling it up.

JESSICA (*Warmly*): Didn't I get you where you are to-night!

BARNEY: Well, of all the nerve! I got myself here.

JESSICA (*Disconcertingly*): How?

BARNEY: By—— (*He stops.*)

JESSICA: Yes, you thought you were mighty cunning. But don't you suppose Aunt would have insisted on paying for that car if I hadn't worked it? I told her it would hurt your feelings.

BARNEY (*Crestfallen*): You did?

JESSICA: She's close, but not so close as all that. And I worked Mrs. Allison, too.

BARNEY: Mrs. Allison?

JESSICA: How could she have explained to her husband your being here—if it hadn't been on our account? You owe it all to me. That was one of the things I was going to tell you if you had come to the station. So you see you have been letting me try without knowing it. And I shall keep on—providing—— (*She pauses.*)

BARNEY (*Annoyed at her, and seeing what is coming*): Oh, you might as well get it out. We ain't talking pink ice cream.

R U S T

JESSICA: Providing you do your share. And—meet me at the station the next time. (*Coming to him, she bends towards him and speaks in a soft, alluring voice.*) You will, won't you? (*Judith enters door left, sees them and stops suddenly in the doorway. Surprised and shocked at Jessica's attitude, she is aware at the same time of an agitation, deeper and of a different sort.*)

JUDITH (*With difficulty controlling her voice*): Well, Jessica, down at last?

JESSICA (*Surprised and angry*): You! (*Recovering herself.*) I thought you had all gone. That somebody was coming back for me.

JUDITH: So there is. For you, Uncle Harry, and me.

JESSICA: And I was just asking Mr. Martini to take me. (*With more assurance, seeing how she can use the pretext to advantage.*) He didn't want to go because he hadn't been asked. Of course I told him that any friend of yours would be more than welcome.

JUDITH (*Embarrassed*): I—good evening, Mr. Martini.

BARNEY (*Advancing to meet her with more than the cordiality of his usual salutation*): How are we to-night, huh?

JESSICA (*Jealously noticing his tone*): So I hope you will assure him I was right. (*Barney is about to protest, but not knowing what to say, stands awkwardly, and embarrassed.*)

JUDITH (*After a moment, in a low voice*):

R U S T

I'm afraid there won't be room for the four of us.

JESSICA: There's the seat that lets down.

BARNEY (*Explosively*): Mind your business! (*More mildly.*) Don't you let her worry you, Mrs. Allison. I wouldn't go even if there was room. That is, unless you needed me.

JESSICA (*Smarting at his tone and at his ignoring her*): Oh, if Mrs. Allison needed you, it would be all right. (*With a sudden idea.*) That's it! I know where I stand now. That's the reason you wouldn't—(*she stops.*)

JUDITH (*Coldly*): I don't know what you are talking about, Jessica.

JESSICA: You don't? I do very well and so does he. And if you don't, you ought to.

BARNEY (*Angrily*): That will be enough from you!

JESSICA: Oh, will it, Mr. Barney Martini? I'll teach you to yell at me in that way. Mrs. Allison—

BARNEY: Shut up, I tell you!

JESSICA: I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself. Because you know it and let it go on.

JUDITH: Know what, Jessica?

BARNEY: Stop!

JESSICA: He is in love with you.

JUDITH (*After a moment, quietly*): We will say good evening, Mr. Martini.

BARNEY: Yes. (*Turning to her awkwardly.*) Don't you let her worry you. (*He starts to go*)

R U S T

and half turns again.) I guess my love ain't the kind you need be ashamed of.

JUDITH (*Slowly, thinking of herself*): No—it is not of you I need be ashamed.

DODD (*Entering by door left*): Not a plate damaged! (*Seeing something is wrong, he darts a quick look at Judith, then at Jessica and Barney.*) Didn't know you were bound this way, Mr. Martini, or I'd have asked you to help me with my traps. But everything is as right as toast. If you have any time to spare from that sea-wall of yours, I'd get you to have a fence built around my property.

(*Judith leaves the group and going to chair right front sits quietly, staring straight ahead of her.*)

JESSICA: Your property, Colonel?

DODD (*Quaintly*): Mrs. Allison has conferred upon me the sole rights to one desk to have and to hold for the length of my stay. I want to keep out all trespassers. Especially young ladies, Miss Jessica. A fence confers all legal rights of property holders, doesn't it, Mr. Martini? Not even that formidable person, a real estate agent, dares cross a fence? Or must I have a sign on it, Miss Jessica? No trespassing allowed? (*He is speaking to fill up time and is all the while glancing from Judith to Jessica and Barney, endeavoring to make up his mind as to the cause of the disturbance.*)

JESSICA: Better ask Mr. Martini. I'm not an authority on trespassing. (*Barney is about to*

R U S T

retort hotly, but controls himself.) But I shouldn't think a mere fence would keep out meddlers. To say nothing of real estate agents.

BARNEY: Sure I wish I had a fence around me. It would keep off squatters anyway.

JESSICA (*Turning away furiously*): Oh!

DODD (*Who by this time has made up his mind that the trouble lies with Jessica and Barney*): Then there are squatters, too, as well as trespassers? Dear me, how hard it is to establish one's rights! I shall have an eye on both of you.

BARNEY: Then I'll be after running away. Good night. (*Judith rises instinctively and looks toward him—he pauses uncertainly and then, taking out of the pocket the little book which he had slipped there when Jessica surprised him, he comes down to her at extreme right.*) Speaking of property, I was carting off some of yours. (*He holds it out, regarding her with dumb wistfulness.*)

JUDITH: Mine?

BARNEY: It has your name in it. I was looking at it.

DODD (*Noting that Jessica is regarding them jealously, he picks up her automobile bonnet*): Is this a bonnet or a basket? Miss Jessica, I dare you to put it on. (*Jessica takes it from him, somewhat ungraciously, and begins to put it on.*)

JUDITH (*To Barney in a low voice*): I must see you. Come back when they go.

R U S T

DODD (*Quaintly*): I thought I heard there was to be a party.

JUDITH (*Advancing to the Colonel, leaving the book in Barney's hand*): The car will be here presently. But I'm afraid you must both go without me. I have such a headache coming on.

DODD: Judy, dear!

JUDITH: It's nothing. Only I must lie down. Jessica will make my excuses.

JESSICA (*Darting a quick look at Barney*): Oh, yes. I'm so sorry.

JUDITH: Have a pleasant evening. (*Going up the stairs.*)

DODD: Dear me, now that's too bad!

JESSICA (*To Barney, who still holds the book in his hand*): Hard to give up other people's property, isn't it? Especially if they're not willing to take anything from one. (*Turning to Dodd*) Colonel, would you ever have suspected that Mr. Martini couldn't stand teasing. I asked him to go to the party and he thought I was making fun of him. As if his not being asked mattered. (*To Barney, seeking to recover her lost ground*) Don't be cross, Mr. Martini. I'm sorry I said a little more than I ought to. It was because I thought you didn't want me. Won't you forgive me and come? (*Without waiting for an answer she turns to Dodd*) Colonel, where is your hat? Now that Mrs. Allison isn't going, I know you hate me for dragging you out at this time of night. But I can go alone

R U S T

easily, or Mr. Martini would be kind enough to come as far as the door.

DODD (*Getting his hat*): You think I'm too old to like parties? I would rather go to a party than eat.

JESSICA: Here comes the car. Now, Colonel, be perfectly frank. Don't come just to escort me. Mr. Martini will go, I'm sure.

SAM (*Opening the door*): All aboard. Step lively.

JESSICA (*Disappointed*): Too bad you had to come back for us.

SAM: Wish there was another load!

DODD (*Putting down his hat*): Well, frankly, Miss Jessica, I guess you're right. I'm too old to go skylarking at this time of night.

JESSICA (*Realizing that his idea has been to keep Barney from going*): Oh! Won't you come, Mr. Martini?

BARNEY (*Shortly*): No, thanks.

JESSICA: Excuse me. I forgot you said good night a while ago.

SAM: Where's Judith?

JESSICA: She isn't going. Severe headache suddenly. (*To Dodd*) Suppose you don't mind doing the honors for Mr. Martini, Colonel, since you are stopping here.

DODD: I'm at the hotel to-night.

JESSICA: Oh, then you'll both walk over together. (*She takes the key from the side of the door and turns*) How dark it is. Help me down, Mr. Bradley-Stone. Oh, wait a minute. (*Turn-*

R U S T

ing back) I'll just slip the catch. You might forget it, Colonel, and the servants are all in the other part of the house. (*She slips it*) You never know when somebody might be walking in. Good night. (*Turning*) Don't let me fall, Mr. Bradley-Stone. (*They exit.*)

Barney and Dodd, left alone, survey each other with some humorous appreciation of the situation.)

BARNEY (*Breaking the silence*): Have a cigar. (*Producing two, he hands Dodd one.*)

DODD: Thanks.

BARNEY (*Looking for matches*): I've left my lights in my other clothes.

DODD: Here are some, I guess. (*Going to mantel he gets a match, lights Barney's cigar and his own*) How long will you be with the sea-wall?

BARNEY: Off and on—all winter.

DODD: The clubhouse won't be open by summer, then?

BARNEY: Begun already. All firm land where that is.

DODD: Pretty expensive operation?

BARNEY: Quite tidy. But we make it up on the two properties together.

DODD: The two?

BARNEY: The old club's in the dicker. Didn't you know? But come to think, it's just been settled at a private meeting of the Board. We're waiting for them to pay something down.

DODD: Dear me! Mrs. Bradley-Stone has a

R U S T

way with her, hasn't she? I should have thought that would go before the members.

BARNEY: What's the odds? They voted for the new place and left the disposal of the old to the Board—as I understand it.

DODD: To be sure.—Going my way?

BARNEY: For a piece. Thought I'd stroll a bit.

DODD: Might as well be moving. (*They get to the door*) Dear me, who would have supposed Miss Jessica would have been so thoughtful. I'm sure I should have forgotten to slip the catch, wouldn't you?

BARNEY: She'll make some man a nice wife.

DODD: Locking him out, you mean. (*He pauses*) Dear me, I almost forgot something else. One of my pamphlets. Don't wait, I'll catch up with you. (*He goes by door left and carefully closes it behind him.*)

Barney unslips the catch quickly. Coming back a step or two, he pauses for deliberation, glances at door left and then up the stairs. Reconsidering, he goes and slips the catch again. Then taking the book from his pocket, he lays it on the stairway between the railings on a level with his shoulder. He exits. Dodd returns and seeing Barney has gone, goes quickly to the door and inspects the latch. He stands a moment thoughtfully, scratching his head.)

DODD (*In a tone of relief*): Jessica, not Ju-

R U S T

dith, thank God! (*He goes, shutting the door softly after him.*)

The stage is empty. A clock in another room strikes eleven in deep tones. After a moment Judith comes to the head of the stairs and looks down. She is in a negligee gown with long, loose sleeves.)

JUDITH (*Coming down a stair or two*): Are you all gone? (*She comes all the way down and out into the room, and assures herself that no one is there. As she goes back she sees the book, takes it down and looks at it. It makes her think of Barney as he intended—holding it in her hand, she goes to the door and unslips the catch. Coming back she sits upon the stairs a few steps up. Taking a package from the bosom of her gown, evidently a silk handkerchief knotted about some articles, she slips the book into it and puts the package beside her on the stairs. Then with her elbows on her knees and her chin in her hands, she waits. Noticing that her arms are bare, her sleeves having fallen back, she tries to cover them. Then as if realizing her undressed condition, she rises quickly as though she had decided to change her gown and turns up the stairs. But thinking better of it, she sits again and her eye then falls on the button in the wall which puts out the lights. She reaches down and touches it and the lights go out. Again for a moment the stage is silent, then somebody is heard at the door. The person enters and closes it behind them. She speaks to*

R U S T

him in a strained voice—half whisper, half speech.)

Are you there? Take this. It makes us quits. I must not see you again. I shall remember what you said to me. I was never to think for a moment you weren't on the level with me. I shall never think it as long as I live. Good-by.

(There is a sound of a quick movement and the lights go up suddenly, disclosing the back of a man who has come forward and turned them on. As the two catch sight of each other, she stands staring at him petrified and he starts back into the hallway. The man is Nicholas.)

CURTAIN.

ACT FOUR

ACT IV.

(Curtain discloses the picture with which the last act ended.)

NICHOLAS: You? (*Judith, her eyes dilated, gazes at him unrealizingly and looks wildly up at the stairs with the primary instinct of flight. Then she turns her eyes to him again. He now speaks to her in a quiet voice of command.*)
Come down.

(*Judith, after a moment, descends slowly and walks draggingly to the mantel. Against this she leans for support. The sudden encounter has plainly been too much for her physical strength. He follows her and puts the bag on the table—and turns facing her, waiting in silence for her to begin.*)

JUDITH (*Lifelessly, with a catch of her breath*): How did you come?

NICHOLAS: I got a lift out.

JUDITH (*Still in the same lifeless voice*): I didn't see how you could get here by train.

NICHOLAS (*Without either sternness or kindness, but desirous of giving her time to recover herself*): I thought you would be at the party.

JUDITH (*Speaking still as if she had a weight on her breath*): The others went. I said I had

R U S T

a headache. I suppose you—you want to hear all. (*He does not answer—she goes on.*) What a stupid thing to say. But—I am getting my mind together. Some of it will wound you. I should like to spare you that part of it. Must I tell you all?

NICHOLAS (*In his neutral voice of withholding judgment*): Spare me nothing. (*She goes and sits left.*)

JUDITH: It has been going on all summer, from the day I met him.

NICHOLAS: Him? Martini?

JUDITH: Yes. He came here to look up some property. I helped him with it. By accident—but I took advantage of it. I cheated you to get money to give to him.

NICHOLAS (*Slowly*): There must be no need of going into this again. Tell me how.

JUDITH: I bought clothes on the bill and sold them.

NICHOLAS: To whom?

JUDITH: To Mrs. Bradley-Stone.

NICHOLAS: Yes.

JUDITH: The business grew on our hands—

NICHOLAS: Ours?

JUDITH: His and mine.

NICHOLAS: Oh, you meant you gave him money in that way?

JUDITH: Yes, we decided— (*Her mind fixed on the main point*) But all that doesn't matter.

NICHOLAS: Everything matters.

JUDITH: We planned to put the clubhouse on

R U S T

the property. And when it was moved, open up the old grounds into building lots.

NICHOLAS (*Thinking it out*): The old grounds. Then the post office——

JUDITH: That was why I asked you to get it changed.

NICHOLAS (*More sternly than before, but still neutrally*): To use my influence. Yes.

JUDITH: So things went on. All the plans were successful. But to-night I felt our relations—his and mine—must be broken off abruptly. Something happened.

NICHOLAS: What was it?

JUDITH: I am coming to that. I felt that I must get free of him entirely. He had advanced me money.

NICHOLAS: For what?

JUDITH: For building the sea-wall. I told you we were partners. We did not expect to have to get it underway at once, before we got the other money. And the time was not ripe to put the club grounds on the market.

NICHOLAS (*Grimly*): Because you had not yet arranged about the post office. I see.

JUDITH: Yes. (*Going back and beginning over again*) He had advanced the money. I could not merely make him a present of my interest and end it that way. He had incurred heavy expenses and he could not realize on my share yet. Not until the club paid us for the new property. Besides he had borrowed already as

R U S T

much as he could. So if I was to end it all at once I must give him my half of the advances.

NICHOLAS: Why must you end it all at once?

JUDITH: I am coming to that. So in my room I thought of a way to get the money. The fund Miss Ewing has been collecting.

NICHOLAS: What must she have thought! What excuse had you to make to her?

JUDITH (*Without faltering*): I did not borrow it.

NICHOLAS: Good God!

JUDITH: She had showed me the box in her trunk. Where she put the subscriptions as they came in. She kept the key under the mattress.

NICHOLAS (*Incredibly*): You took it?

JUDITH: Yes; most of it.

NICHOLAS (*Quietly and searchingly, but as if it were unbelievable*): You—my wife!

JUDITH: Yes.

NICHOLAS (*In despair*): Deceiving me all these months—cheating me. But at least you were stealing from *me*. Now—

JUDITH: And that is not all.

NICHOLAS: No. (*Very gravely and slowly*) Nor is it all that you have made a tool of me. You have made me an accomplice. (*She stares at him in surprise*) You got me to use my influence to further a private scheme. If it were known that my wife had financially benefited by the removal of the post office I should forfeit every decent man's respect. As it is, I have forfeited my own. You have degraded me!

R U S T

JUDITH (*Springing up—with the first emotion she has shown*): Oh, Nicholas, I beg you to believe I never thought of that! I never dreamed of it!

NICHOLAS (*Bitterly*): No. You simply wanted to succeed. And I was a tool close at hand, and, as it happened, just the thing you could use. Could you not have left me out of it? Your husband whom you were deliberately deceiving and cheating all the time? It fills me with shame.

JUDITH: Nicholas, I—I do not know what to say. I am overwhelmed.

NICHOLAS: That is no worse than the rest, except that there was more at stake. In each instance you have made me contribute to your schemes—schemes that you knew I would hold in abhorrence. You used my position as a member of this community to get the post office you would privately profit by. What would any public man say to that? You manipulated me as a member of the club to sell some property you had secretly bought. What would any of the members—your other dupes—say to that? You systematically cheated your husband to make the money to engage in speculations you knew he would not have permitted. Can you deny it?

JUDITH: I have no wish to deny anything, Nicholas.

NICHOLAS: And with a common sharp and blackleg. Since he was becoming so intimate

R U S T

here I had him looked up. I meant to tell you before I kicked him out. And now—my wife to be hand-and-glove with him in his dirty schemes!

JUDITH: What he may have been and done with others I do not know. But with me he has been honest and a gentleman.

NICHOLAS: A gentleman!

JUDITH: Yes, in heart—a chivalrous gentleman. But I tell you the blame is mine. Let us leave him out of the question. At least out of this part of it.

NICHOLAS: This part of it? What do you mean?

JUDITH: I mean as far as our business interests went, I was the ringleader. Making use of his practical knowledge to help myself.

NICHOLAS: To help yourself? Why? To what?

JUDITH (*Vehemently*): To get out.

NICHOLAS (*Alarmed and bewildered*): Out of what?

JUDITH: This dead stagnation of doing nothing! This utter emptiness of life!

NICHOLAS: We have spoken of this before, Judith. I thought you saw then how inexpressibly painful it was to me—to know that your husband's life and home did not content you.

JUDITH (*Wearily*): Yes, we have talked of this before. But you asked me why I did it and I told you.

NICHOLAS (*Sorrowfully*): And you see what it has led to. Deception, trickery, and now—

R U S T

(*suddenly*) Thank God, you were saved from becoming a thief!

JUDITH (*Soberly*) I have not been saved! I am a thief. In your sight and in mine.

NICHOLAS (*Despondently*): Yes. It has led you to all of them—deception, trickery and theft.

JUDITH: Nicholas, I do not wish to defend myself. But I must make things plain between us. The deception you have made necessary. I regret it, but I could do nothing else. I have a right to my life as well as you.

NICHOLAS: Your life!

JUDITH: The trickery I regret also. But it was only common business practice. The ugly part was that I couldn't do it openly. That, too, was made necessary by you. The stealing from your purse I admit. Nothing should have made me stoop to that. I should have told you I would no longer put up with being penniless.

NICHOLAS (*Slowly*): It fills me with horror to see how adroit your mind has become. In finding plausible excuses—as little by little you have gone on from bad to worse. You admit you should not have stolen from me. How about—the other? Can you defend that?

JUDITH: No, Nicholas; but that was not caused by anything that went before. That was what I meant when I said I wanted to spare you pain.

NICHOLAS (*Laughing hardly*): Good God, has there not been pain! To find my wife guilty of all this! Of discontent with her husband's home! Of peddling his property! Of trading

R U S T

upon his honor! A husband who got you everything you wanted—my God! I was bringing home to you to-night the post office—because you said you wanted it.

JUDITH: I told you, Nicholas, I had not foreseen that. And if I had known it beforehand, I would have done anything rather than that. I beg of you to believe me. But at the time—before I began telling you all this—I thought that only one thing would wound you. I knew the rest would shock and outrage you, shake you to the soul. But I thought only one thing would really wound you—in your heart. I am not so sure about that now.

NICHOLAS: What is it?

JUDITH: The day we—he and I—got the idea for the post—— (*She breaks off*) Believe me, he knew nothing about what I thought of doing. He only said we must try to get it moved. He does not know yet that I spoke to you.—That day I saw—he cared for me. It was the day I was coming to your office. I wanted to confess everything.

NICHOLAS (*Wincing*): I thought it was because I left without saying good-by to you.

JUDITH: You had no right to think that was all. I told you there was something else. I tried to tell you afterwards, you remember.

NICHOLAS: Go on.

JUDITH: Then, as time passed, I saw plainly his—his feeling for me. He was so honest, so reverent about it. When such things happen to

R U S T

a woman, it is a tribute hard to pass by. And so—I felt grateful for it. I even gloried in it. Then to-night, something happened to make me see it in another light.

NICHOLAS: See what?

JUDITH (*Falteringly*): That he—cared for me.

NICHOLAS: But you had seen that already.

JUDITH: This was different. It was before somebody else.

NICHOLAS: Who?

JUDITH: Jessica. And it was not until——

NICHOLAS: Until what?

JUDITH: I thought I saw another woman taking my place with him. And I found suddenly that I was jealous! That came up before me—all at once—in a moment. And before I had time to see what it meant Jessica accused me.

NICHOLAS (*Tensely*): Of what?

JUDITH: Of knowing that he loved me and letting it go on. And then he said—before her—that he loved me. Said it simply and respectfully. And that time——

NICHOLAS: That time?

JUDITH: I was no longer troubled by it. I was not even grateful any more. I was—you said I should tell you everything—I was—glad. When I found out I was glad, the floor seemed to slip under me. I felt I must do something at once—at once to end it.

NICHOLAS: What was it you did?

JUDITH: I told him to come back when the others had gone. I said I had a headache and

R U S T

went to my room. I intended there to find out some way to end it. Then I thought of Miss Ewing's money. I took it. And there you have it all—all.

NICHOLAS (*Recovering from the strain he has been under*): But why did you have to end it all at once? That moment?

JUDITH: Don't you understand? I was in a panic. I had found out that I was glad that he loved me. It seemed to me I must save myself at once. End our relations and never see him again.

NICHOLAS (*Persisting*): But why could you not have waited until morning? Have told me all about it and let me help you out?

JUDITH: You? You were the last one I wished to know. I should have told you nothing but for this.

NICHOLAS: You would have gone on deceiving me?

JUDITH: In that—yes. I should have thought it best. But I should not have gone on seeing him.

NICHOLAS (*Searchingly*): Judith, do you no longer love me?

JUDITH (*After looking at him as keenly*): Of course I should have put him out of my thoughts as fast as I could, if that is what you mean.

NICHOLAS (*Taking this for an answer and stiffening*): Oh! (*After a moment, coldly*)

R U S T

And what good has all this done you? You still have the half-interest to be settled up.

JUDITH (*As coldly*): Yes, I see that now. But it can be done without my meeting him again. What do you propose to do? You will send him a check of course.

NICHOLAS: A check—for what?

JUDITH (*Pointing to the table*) For this money. (*Going to it and taking it*) They will be getting home. I must replace it. (*Soberly*) Now that it is no longer necessary for any one to know I was a thief.

NICHOLAS (*To himself in agitation*): Let me think, let me think! (*She is at the staircase*) Come back! (*She turns questioningly—he continues slowly and in pain*) You will give him this money.

JUDITH (*Not understanding*): But—— Miss Ewing?

NICHOLAS: I will give the check to her.

JUDITH (*Thunderstruck*): I do not understand.

NICHOLAS: We must have no more deception.

JUDITH (*Slowly*): You have the right to make your own terms.

NICHOLAS (*Dully*): I cannot connive at this. God knows I would shield you if I could. You say I have been to blame. I do not see it, but perhaps you are right. We will take the blame together then.

JUDITH (*More slowly and wonderingly*): So—that—is—your—idea?

R U S T

NICHOLAS: You took this money. It was only a chance that you did not deliver it where you intended. All my life long I should feel that we had conspired together to conceal your guilt. Judith, do you not see? Let us be independent of accidents. Let us scorn to take advantage of circumstances. You knew when you took this money it would be found out. You were willing to undergo the humiliation, were you not? Very well. I will taste it with you. We will drink of it together. You told me that I did not share. I will share this, and we will begin our life together again, knowing that we have nothing to hide—that such as we are, we can look the world in the face.

JUDITH (*Catching his moral glow*): Yes, you are right. I will tell her. (*She puts the package on the table—as she turns from it, she listens suddenly*) Hush! (*The handle of the door is turned stealthily and the door is opened. Barney enters and closes it behind him. He cannot see who is in the room on account of the projection.*)

NICHOLAS: Come in.

(*Barney looks in surprise on hearing the voice. Judith goes to extreme right and stands gazing in front of her, her hands instinctively grasping a chair for support. Nicholas who is looking at her, meets her glance of appeal. Barney, after a moment, comes forward into the room and seeing Judith pauses, wondering what to expect.*)

R U S T

BARNEY (*To Nicholas*): How are we to-night, huh?

NICHOLAS (*Sternly, but in a controlled voice*): There on the table you will find some money which Mrs. Allison owes you. Her share of the expenses incurred. You will wind up her partnership with you as soon as possible. And by letter to me.

BARNEY (*Looking in perplexity and dismay at Judith, who still keeps her back to him. He speaks to her wistfully*): Have I done anything, Mrs. Allison? What's the matter? Huh?

NICHOLAS (*Quickly and anxious to make it as easy for her as possible*): I do not wish this relation to continue.

BARNEY (*Timidly*): Is—that your wish, Mrs. Allison?

JUDITH (*Slowly, without turning*): Yes.

BARNEY (*To him, humbly and conciliatingly*): Say, you needn't be so close about it. What have I done?

NICHOLAS (*More firmly, but restraining himself on Judith's account*): Mrs. Allison has engaged in this affair without my knowledge. I should never have allowed it. To-night it ceases at once, and for all.

BARNEY (*Slowly*): Well, of course, you've got the right. Is that your wish, Mrs. Allison?

JUDITH (*Without turning*): Yes.

NICHOLAS (*Pointing to the money*): Take it. (*Barney, with his eyes upon Judith, goes to the table and puts his hand upon the package and*

R U S T

lifts it slowly. Nicholas now for the first time breaks out passionately) Now, get out of my house, and never enter it again!

(Judith, about to turn, grips the chair and forces herself to remain still.)

BARNEY *(Turning upon him angrily)*: What do you mean? Huh? Huh? Huh? *(The two men stand facing each other, though at some distance. Barney goes on defiantly)* Tell me what you've got to say! *(Still facing Nicholas he throws the package down upon the table. It strikes the wood sharply. Barney is arrested at the sound and falls immediately from his truculent attitude. He turns wistfully to Judith again)* What else is in it, Mrs. Allison?

NICHOLAS: When my wife asked you to return to-night she meant to give you that. Take it, I tell you, and go.

BARNEY *(Paying no attention to him, and falteringly)*: Guess I'll see what's in it first. *(He unties the handkerchief on the table. Then wretchedly in a voice of expectation confirmed)* My watch!

NICHOLAS *(With amazement)*: Your watch! *(To her in anguish)* Judith?

BARNEY: I pawned it to her.

NICHOLAS: Pawned!

BARNEY *(Hotly)*: You didn't expect she'd pinched it, did you? *(He turns disconsolately to the table again)* Oh! *(He lifts the little book wonderingly and turns to Judith.)*

R U S T

NICHOLAS: Take your possessions and pass out of our lives forever.

BARNEY (*Still looking at Judith*): Did you mean that? When you did it up for me?

JUDITH (*Without turning*): Yes.

BARNEY (*Joyfully and with profound relief*): I see! (*In a tone which seems jocular to Nicholas*) All right, Mr. Allison. (*He puts the book tenderly in his inside pocket, thrusts the money loosely into his coat pocket, and puts the watch in his waistcoat and affixes the chain.*)

NICHOLAS (*To whom these operations seem sheer effrontery*): Have you finished?

BARNEY (*Looking at him squarely*): Yes. (*With another look at Judith, he pauses uncertainly and absently takes his watch from his pocket and fingering it, begins to wind it. Noticing this, he says naïvely to Nicholas*) You might tell me what time it is. (*Judith bursts into hysterical laughter and sits down.*)

NICHOLAS (*Infuriated at this double affront*): Is it not enough that you come skulking into my house—but you must go swaggering out of it! You and your dirty schemes no honest man would touch! You low-lived sharper and trickster! (*Judith, fearing an outbreak on Barney's part rises instinctively.*)

BARNEY (*Good-humoredly*): It's the Irish in me. (*Emphasizing his brogue*) The fine nose for business it will be christened some day. When I move down on Wall Street. Next to you!

R U S T.

NICHOLAS (*More angrily*): How dare you! Compare your trickery to my business methods! You and your peanut swindles!

BARNEY (*Still good-humoredly, but with a note of warning in his voice*): That's the Eye-talian cropping out. I served me apprenticeship in the fruit-peddling industry. But in time I'll get to large legitimate deals—like yours.

NICHOLAS: You——

JUDITH (*Breaking in peremptorily*): Good night, Mr. Martini!

NICHOLAS (*Stung by her implication that he is not conducting himself fitly*): Not content with using my wife as a cat's-paw! With corrupting her loyalty! Making her trade upon her friendships and her husband's honor! Now you must attack my reputation!

JUDITH (*Seeking to stop him*): Nicholas!

NICHOLAS (*Beside himself*): My reputation. That I must shelter her with. Since you have made her a common thief.

BARNEY (*Furiously*): What? Who says so?

NICHOLAS (*Realizing that he has said too much but not knowing how to get out of it*): Leave my house!

BARNEY: What do you mean? Huh? Huh? Huh?

NICHOLAS (*Doggedly*): Her eyes opened at last, she stole that money to get rid of you.

JUDITH (*Sinking hopelessly into a chair*): Oh, Nicholas, Nicholas!

BARNEY: Stole it? Well, what of it! A man's

R U S T

pocket is his wife's—as my mother used to say when she helped herself. (*In an exaggerated brogue he pretends to be quoting from her*) “It's the dir-rtty spalpeen as would lay that name to his wife for taking her own.”

NICHOLAS (*Making the application*): It was before I returned. Or none of this would have happened.

BARNEY: Before? (*Helplessly*) From some one in the house? (*Energetically*) Man, man, what are you doing! Here! (*Running to Judith he tries to cram the money into her hand.*)

JUDITH (*Rising and retreating*): No!

BARNEY: Quick. Put it back. (*Following her*): Before they come.

JUDITH (*Crying out instinctively for aid*): Nicholas!

NICHOLAS: Stop! She shall not put it back.

BARNEY: Not?

NICHOLAS: We have talked it over. She is ready to face the consequences. And I with her.

BARNEY (*Frantically*): The consequences? The consequences? But there will be no consequences.

NICHOLAS (*Loftily*): Of course you could not understand.

BARNEY: What?

NICHOLAS: That I cannot—that she would not have me connive at this. That we feel the need of expiation.

BARNEY: Expiation? Rats! You talk like a kid. You would call her a thief before the

R U S T

world? To tickle your mush of a conscience? You better feed it with something else than your wife! You aren't worth licking her shoes. (*Pleadingly*) Take it, Madonna! Mavourneen!

JUDITH: No!

BARNEY (*Turning on him furiously*): This is your work. She's got too much sense for that stuff. Come, be a man. Tell her to take it.

NICHOLAS (*In exaltation*): No; we cannot afford to dodge the results. The thing itself we cannot undo—but we can atone together.

BARNEY (*Striding up and down, beside himself with anger*): Mush! Mush! I'll tell you what you can't afford to do. To look your sniveling self in the face. If you did, you'd see there that you want to pamper your own righteousness. Porco dio! corpo di Baccho! No, you must not connive at it! If you did, you might soil your own pretty fingers. And what she's done mightn't seem so big when you threw it up to her. Porco Santo Francesco! Corpo di Baccho! That she should be at the mercy of such a pig!

JUDITH: Barney!

BARNEY (*Stopping suddenly—his face lighting up as he realizes that she has called him by his first name. He answers in his tone of adoring respect*): Madonna!

JUDITH (*Softly, but in a clear final voice*): I want you to go now.

BARNEY (*Pleadingly*): I can't go until he tells me he will stop this damn foolishness.

R U S T

JUDITH: He will not tell you. And I do not wish it.

BARNEY: You?

JUDITH (*After a moment*): What he wishes, I wish.

BARNEY (*To Nicholas*): Then promise me you will sleep on it. Stuff it in your pillow and pound your ear on it. Only look in the glass before you do and see if what I say ain't so.

NICHOLAS (*Coldly*): We will attend to our own affairs—my wife and I. You have come between us long enough.

BARNEY (*Suddenly*): What do you mean—by come between you?

JUDITH (*Quickly interposing*): Nicholas, all this is a mistake. I forbid you to go on. I will bear no more.

BARNEY (*Seeing his meaning from her tone*): You mean because—because I worship the ground she walks on? What's that to you! Do you suppose you could stop a man's worshipping her just because you married her? She's the only one that can stop it.

NICHOLAS (*Defiantly but miserably*): And she hasn't tried!

BARNEY: Praise be the Holy Saints she hasn't. What's it to her! And I'm asking you, what's it to you? You're the ace in this deck. Nothing's going to touch you—more's the pity. Will you take this money?

NICHOLAS: No.

BARNEY: Will you sleep on it?

R U S T

NICHOLAS: No.

BARNEY (*Sitting down*): Then here I stay all night. I want to be in at the killing. (*Coolly*) What you going to do about it? If you make a row it will be worse for her. If you try to kick me out it will be worse for you. And to outstay your welcome ain't a shooting offence. So I guess I'm safe.

JUDITH (*After a moment, coming to him*): Barney.

BARNEY (*Still sitting*): I know I'm a brute for not doing what you want. But I can't.

JUDITH: I am going to tell you something. I took that money because I wanted never to see you again. Because I found out something to-night that made me afraid. I had gloried in your love for me, but when I saw you with Jessica I was angry and I saw suddenly what that might mean and that it should not go on. I did not want you to know this. But now I see that you will understand. And I know that you will treat it as a sacred confidence and deal chivalrously with my secret. I have no fear of you. As for the rest, my husband and I must be free to do what we think is right. Will you go now?

BARNEY (*Who has risen adoringly during her speech, solemnly*): Yes.

JUDITH (*Holding out her hand*): Good-by.

BARNEY (*Taking her hand*): I want you to know you're the best thing that ever happened to me. You make me proud.

R U S T

JUDITH (*Simply*): Thank you. And I shall be proud of you. Because my husband sees things differently you must not misjudge him. And because he has led a different life, he will not misjudge you. In one thing you stand on even footing. You have both dealt always honorably by me. I should like you to shake hands with my husband before you go. Will you, Nicholas?

NICHOLAS (*Who has had his back to them, turns—understanding what she means to convey by this*): Yes.

BARNEY (*In some happy bewilderment at this contact with a higher code than he knows of*): Say, I guess I don't know much. I ain't used to this.

(*The door opens with a noise of chatter disclosing Mrs. Bradley-Stone, Sam, Jessica, and Miss Ewing.*)

MRS. B. (*In the doorway*): Yes, he says he is. Didn't you hear him say he's always glad to be kept up by his wifey?

SAM: Aw, cut it out!

JESSICA (*Coming in ahead of them, and looking at Judith and Barney curiously*): Why, Mr. Allison. You got home too late, didn't you? And Mr. Martini here again? Mrs. Allison, I see your headache is better.

MISS E.: Did you have a headache, dear? (*To Jessica*) I thought it was business with Mr. Martini.

JESSICA (*With just a slight indication of con-*

R U S T

fusion, though self-possessed): No, Aunt. I said that some business with Mr. Martini must have given her a headache. Shall I put these away now?

MISS E.: Yes, please. (*Jessica goes up the stairs.*)

MRS. B. (*Coming down*): You were well out of it. Such a stupid time.

MISS E. (*Enthusiastically*): Stupid? I got three subscriptions.

MRS. B. (*Going to chair at extreme right*): Please come and take off my shoes, Mr. Martini.

BARNEY: Sure. (*He goes and kneels in front of her.*)

MISS E.: So you got back to-night, Mr. Allison?

MRS. B. (*To Barney in a low voice*): Victory! I landed him to-night. Now we have the majority on the Board and you get the money at once.

BARNEY: Good. (*He busies himself with the shoes.*)

JUDITH (*Who has exchanged a glance with Nicholas, comes to Miss Ewing*): We have something to say to you—Nicholas and I—when Mr. Martini and the rest go.

BARNEY (*Rising*): I think I'll say good night, ladies and gentlemen. (*He starts toward the door.*)

JESSICA (*Running down the stairs in excitement*): Why, Aunt! Aunt! The box is gone!

R U S T

MISS E.: Gone! The subscription box?

BARNEY: Yes. I took it. Here it is. (*He thrusts the money into Miss Ewing's hand.*)

JUDITH (*In a ringing voice*): Mr. Martini! (*Barney stops, confused and shamefaced*): He took it when I gave it to him, Miss Ewing. That was what Nicholas and I had to tell you. I stole the money.

MISS E. (*Incredibly*): You?

JUDITH: Yes.

NICHOLAS: But I, too! We needed it desperately to-night—and she took it for me.

BARNEY: Because I made a howl for it and threatened them.

JUDITH: Neither of them made me, Miss Ewing. They knew nothing about it. I alone am guilty. I got the key from under the mattress and the box is in my room. Some money is still in it—the rest is there.

MRS. B.: Well, I must say, Judith——

MISS E.: You took my money? Worse than mine. A sacred trust for humanity!

JUDITH: Yes.

MISS E.: You with your money? All you could possibly use in your private purse——

NICHOLAS (*Poignantly*): No, no! That is where I am to blame.

MISS E.: What made you? It must be some taint of heredity.

JUDITH: No. I had my reasons. But they excuse nothing. I do not wish to hide behind

R U S T

them. I stole to attain my object—like any thief.

JESSICA: What was your object? I think Aunt has a right to know.

MISS E. (*With dignity*): Jessica! Let us respect Judith's reasons.

JESSICA: But we can't help wondering. And they may have been good ones.

MISS E.: Good ones? Good enough to— (*Sorrowfully*) You see, Judith, how it confuses the standard of right and wrong! When a person like you stoops to such a thing. Jessica admires you so that you have vitiated her notions of common propriety. You will understand, then, that this terrible disclosure leaves me no choice. I can't have my child corrupted. We must leave by the first train in the morning. (*She starts to go*) And to spare us needless pain, I hope you will keep to your room till we go. Come, Jessica. (*She gets to the stairs*) Rest assured your secret is safe with us. Unless of course ordinary honesty to others should force us to reveal it. (*She goes up the stairs and midway turns to Jessica, who is lingering with a curious look on Barney.*) Come, Jessica. (*Jessica unwillingly follows.*)

JESSICA (*As her aunt disappears, turning midway on the stairs*): I believe they were good ones, don't you, Mr. Martini?

MRS. B. (*Coming forward from right where she has been since the discovery*): Well, I must say, Judith! This is a pretty mess. This is

R U S T

what comes of your business training, I suppose. I knew something was in the wind when you were squeezing all that money out of me. I told you then that you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Deceiving your husband so. But I didn't think it would get to this.

SAM (*Going deliberately in front of her*): Aw, cut it out! (*He holds out his hand to Judith, who takes it.*) Good night, Judith.

MRS. B.: Yes, you were always standing up for her. Suppose I deceived you like that!

SAM (*Turning suddenly*): Like what?

MRS. B. (*Blankly—seeing she is in a hole*): Selling her husband's things. At less than he paid for them. (*She stops, seeing she is making it worse.*)

SAM (*Sternly*): What'd you have to do with it? (*She hesitates.*) Out with it!

MRS. B.: Well, it was none of my business if she wanted to sell me clothes.

SAM: Better make it none of your business now.

MRS. B. (*Much irritated*): None of my business! It's everybody's business. She's a miser I tell you—she doesn't care how she gets money so she gets it. There's no knowing what she'll do next. People ought to be protected.

SAM: See here, my lady! You're just ten months in the hole with me. If I hear of your saying anything about this, you can whistle for a red cent of mine.

MRS. B.: Oh, that's your game, is it? Shield-

R U S T

ing her at your wife's expense. When you've been fooled like the rest of them. I bet if the truth were known she engineered that whole club business. (*Suddenly to Barney*) That's the reason she's been so thick with you. (*To Sam*) What do you think of that for your paragon?

BARNEY (*Playing his trump card with joyous deliberation*): Yes, she had something to do with it. She started it and let you do all the work. Being on the Board of Directors.

MRS. B.: What! Then I've just been pulling her chestnuts out all the time! When I thought I was working for the good of the club. To be advancing your swindles. (*Barney and Sam chuckle*) Me a—a puller-in for you! Oh, you'll get your pay for this!

BARNEY: Don't fret, so will you. The ten per cent. commission I promised you.

MRS. B. (*Staggered*): I might have known you couldn't keep your word like a gentleman.

BARNEY (*Jocularly*): It's all in the family.

SAM: I'm going to bed.

MRS. B.: Do you think I'd sleep another night under her roof? Mr. Allison, I am deeply grieved for you. Will you kindly lend us your car? Sam and I are motoring to town.

SAM (*At the foot of the stairs*): Not if I know it.

MRS. B.: I'll go alone then.

SAM: If you do—or make any row whatever—I'll show you up to the Board of Directors—

R U S T

for taking a commission. Better change your mind and come to bed.

MRS. B. (*Baffled*): Oh! (*Sweeping her train about her she walks majestically but hurriedly up the stairs.*)

SAM: She says she won't make any row. Didn't you hear her say she wouldn't make any row? (*He skips up the stairs gleefully.*)

BARNEY (*Timidly*): You might have let me say I took it.

JUDITH (*Going to chair right and sitting wearily*): Thank you, Barney. It would have been all the same.

NICHOLAS (*Groaning*): Oh, what a wretched business! Oh, how undignified! To have had all this precipitated before her!

BARNEY: Oh, she doesn't matter. (*Much pleased with himself*) I took the wind out of her sails all right.

NICHOLAS (*In helpless exasperation*): Out of hers? You took it out of everybody's. How dare you seem to wring from us a confession—which we had made up our minds to give freely! Turning to a farce a dignified and sacred occasion! Mr. Martini, you doubtless meant well, but your interference was really insufferable. (*Pointedly*) And still remains so!

BARNEY: Oh, I'm going. (*He looks at Judith and goes to the door, ruefully.*) Maybe I did make a fist of it. But she knows why and I ain't afraid to leave it with her. God knows, she'll need some consolation—now you've made

R U S T

a thief of her! (*With another thought*) Mr. Allison, I've said my last word to her, and now I'll say it to you. I don't think much of you, and may God forgive you for what you've done—but I'll do you one credit. You never said a dirty word to her about—my loving her. If you had, I'd have smashed that mule's head of yours! (*His voice breaks*) I guess you're square according to your light—but you got a damn poor quality of oil. (*With a sob he shuts the door after him.*)

NICHOLAS: (*After a moment, diffidently*): Well, it's all over. We're alone.

JUDITH (*With a smile of bitter irony*): We've a common interest at last.

NICHOLAS (*Sadly*): What do you mean?

JUDITH: Something you can understand me in. At least that much has been gained. An hour ago I should have said it was impossible.

NICHOLAS (*Wincing, and speaking in a stiff grave voice*): My dear—If you mean him, I think I may say I do understand.

JUDITH (*Still with bitter irony*): Oh, him, too! That makes another interest that we share. I was speaking of our common expiation. Does it strike you, Nicholas, that even with the best of men the woman always gets the worst of it? Thanks to your arrangement, we expiate my sin together—but I answer for yours all alone.

NICHOLAS (*Troubled*): My dear. Very humbly I ask you what is my sin?

JUDITH (*Rising wearily*): Oh, nothing, noth-

R U S T

ing! We have been all through it before. (*She goes back a little.*)

NICHOLAS (*Gently and sadly*): I was not to blame that it did not turn out as I thought. I meant that we should join hands together and begin a new life. That is what it should have been.

JUDITH (*Laughing nervously*): Oh, that! (*He winces*) Excuse me, Nicholas. But I do not think that I can bear any more.

NICHOLAS (*Deeply wounded*): No. You are tired of course.

(*Some one taps at the window.*)

JUDITH (*Standing where she can see, nods eagerly*): Yes. (*She starts toward the door.*)

NICHOLAS (*Passionately*): Do not let him in.

JUDITH (*As she goes*): It's Uncle Harry!

NICHOLAS: Oh!

JUDITH (*Opening the door*): Why, Uncle Harry. At this time of night.

DODD (*Entering*): I saw the light and thought I'd ask you if I couldn't change my mind. Spend the night after all. (*Whimsically*) You see, I was anxious about my traps. (*Pinching her chin fondly*) What is it? May I not spend the night?

NICHOLAS (*Awkwardly*): Certainly. (*He looks at Judith in perplexity.*)

JUDITH: Uncle Harry, I wish you would. My friends are all leaving by the early train.

DODD: Leaving?

JUDITH: Yes. How nice it will be to have you

R U S T

all to myself. I have given you the little room right next to your den. Near your precious old stuff. (*She laughs*) Everything is laid out, but I don't think your bed is made up. I must go and fix it.

NICHOLAS: No, Judith, I'll ring.

JUDITH: And wake them all up? Nonsense. I'd love to make Uncle Harry's bed. Used to do it, didn't I, Colonel? Besides, I haven't made a bed in years. (*She goes left.*)

DODD (*Quickly turning to Nicholas*): What is it? Martini and Jessica?

NICHOLAS: Jessica!

DODD (*Falteringly*): Not—Judith?

NICHOLAS (*Reflecting*): You will have to know anyway. Judith—

DODD (*Hastily*): Perhaps she would rather tell me herself.

NICHOLAS: No, it is best I tell you. Judith has been doing business with Martini. Unknown to me. She had to get rid of him to-night. And to do so, she took Miss Ewing's money.

DODD: And you?

NICHOLAS: I came home in time to find it out.

DODD (*Puzzled*): But they are leaving?

NICHOLAS: Judith agreed with me she should confess all.

DODD: With you? I see.

NICHOLAS (*Despairingly*): What else could I do? I could not feel all my life I had connived

R U S T

at it. She would not respect me if I did. And she too! She saw that it would be cowardly to take advantage of a circumstance. Now confession has purified her—has purified us both. Otherwise she would go all her life with that guilt uncleansed.

DODD (*Slowly*): Another one of your immoral moralities!

NICHOLAS (*In anguish*): You think I sacrificed her to my idea of right? You also?

DODD: Who else?

NICHOLAS: That man—Martini.

DODD (*Whimsically*): Commend me to a scamp for a sound conscience. There's not much of it, but it's healthy. Curious how disease attacks the higher forms.

NICHOLAS (*Passionately*): But are there no ideas of right and wrong? You would have had her go all her life with nothing to help her bear it—the knowledge she was a thief?

DODD: Allison, right and wrong differ in every case, and they are matters of opinion. I have given you mine. (*Very solemnly*) And I give it to you from a bitter personal experience. I would not be the man I am if every ugly fact in my life were made public. (*Changing testily*) I can't afford to stir up ethics, either Christian or Pagan. But for Heaven's sake don't fly in the face of common sense—and prattle about saving her from the knowledge of her sin all her life. You've managed to fasten it on her pretty firmly.

R U S T

NICHOLAS: What do you mean?

DODD: There was a public man in all the newspapers the other day for smuggling. Suppose if he hadn't been caught, his knowledge of guilt would have troubled him all his life?

NICHOLAS (*Aghast*): You condone theft?

DODD (*Warmly*): Don't be a fool, Allison! If she stole, she stole. I think I know what that means as well as you. But I believe in giving a sore the chance to get well without meddling. And you were the last person to meddle.

NICHOLAS: I?

DODD (*Coolly*): You made the sore.

NICHOLAS: This is too much, Colonel.

DODD: No, it's only half enough. The other half is to stop doing it. What caused all this miserable muddle? Simply that Judith had to have something to do. Why didn't you give her something to do?

NICHOLAS (*In bewilderment but with irritation*): She did what a woman has always done. Keep her husband's home for him.

DODD: No, she didn't do quite that. You wanted to stop her from making a bed just now—when she was eager to do it. You have always stopped her. And Judith has a mind which is not content to make beds. I think she has almost as much mind as you. Would you be content to make beds?

NICHOLAS (*Doggedly*): I don't know what's got into women. It's the same everywhere—the modern malady!

R U S T

DODD: Yes, thank God—your God or mine, Allison, I don't care! What do you expect women to do? Sleep away the hours like bored cats and dogs?—Then, too, you have taken out of their natural state to tame for your pleasure. That was all well enough when women had no minds to bother them. If you wanted them to go on sleeping, you should never have allowed their minds to be stirred up.

NICHOLAS: But—but—a woman's natural business——

DODD (*Interrupting testily*): A woman's natural business is like yours and mine, Allison! Only bigger. You will pardon me, but Judith is not at her natural business. Lacking that, she must—if she is to use her healthy instincts—be creating something else.

NICHOLAS (*Groaning*): But the vulgar trickery of all this! The deceit!

DODD: Allison, heard you raked in a pile of money the other day. Send out cards beforehand?

NICHOLAS (*Helplessly*): But she got me to use my influence to move the post office—for her personal benefit. You can't excuse that.

DODD: Dear me, most reprehensible. What does any one ask to have a post office moved for?

NICHOLAS (*More helplessly*): Oh, I could overlook anything—anything, but the great fact that she stole!

DODD (*Surveying him curiously, but impa-*

R U S T

tiently): Bless the man! And he calls that the great fact!

JUDITH (*Entering*): There, Uncle Harry, your room's ready. Now you can get up in the middle of the night, if you want to, and see that your precious traps are safe.

DODD: Thank you, my dear. (*Turning to Alison with a sudden idea.*) Do you know what I'm trying to do with my traps?

NICHOLAS (*Without interest*): Kill flies, Miss Ewing—Judith told me.

DODD: Precisely. But not the way Miss Ewing believes in. Which makes me think of something that will be of especial interest to you. Would you believe it? She has her ideas of right and wrong in killing flies. She says that Providence intended flies to be slapped off one by one and not destroyed by the millions. Now my way—the blasphemous scientific way—(*He breaks off*) My dear friends, I feel I am about to perpetrate a parable. May I?

JUDITH: Of course, you silly Uncle Harry.

DODD: There is a little parasite which preys on mankind. It is found in everybody—that is, almost everybody. And it goes by the name of busy-ness. It is an insect of enormous strength vested in iron teeth, with which it gnaws and gnaws. We are powerless under it and feed it with ourselves, whether we will or no. The only thing to do is to find another parasite which will gnaw at it and keep it in order. There are plenty of parasites, but many of them are bad

R U S T

ones, which can't set to work without destroying better things. And we don't always know the bad ones when we see them. Problem—To find the right parasite. Or to be accurate, any of the right ones, for, thank God, there are several of them also.

JUDITH (*In a hushed voice*): Yes: There would be more than one for me.

DODD: I myself have discovered one for my own case. Would you like to hear about that, Allison? I am, I believe, a respectable member of society—and there are even people who look for good work from me yet. But when—by great misfortune not only to me but to others—I lost my first parasite, my insect of busy-ness went wild. It ran amuck with every decent thing in life. For three years it made me a sot, a renegade from civilization, a moral maniac. Then by the grace of God I found my second parasite and the little destroyer became an orderly workman once more. (*Taking a lighter tone*) And that is why, Judy dear, I like to sleep near my traps. (*He darts suddenly out by door left.*)

JUDITH (*To herself*): He told me on purpose. He will understand.

NICHOLAS (*Humbled and broken*): And I, too, Judith. I see now what you meant. That my own actions brought all this about. And I see, too, that I was thinking more of myself—when I made you confess.

R U S T

JUDITH (*Slowly*): Perhaps it was best—I do not know.

NICHOLAS: Yes, they were right. The Colonel (*Bitterly*) and Martini.

JUDITH: Ah, poor Barney!

NICHOLAS (*With a sob of despair*): Judith, do you no longer love me?

JUDITH (*With a glad cry*): Nicholas! Then you do care?

NICHOLAS: Care?

JUDITH (*Babbling almost incoherently*): Oh, it *was* all right. It *has* brought us together. I thought you didn't. We had so little in common. You couldn't understand what I wanted.

NICHOLAS: My dear—how could you ever have thought I didn't care! (*He holds out his arms to her*): Why—you put me off when I asked you once before to-night.

JUDITH (*Laughing and crying*): Ah, but you didn't ask like that. (*She comes to his arms.*)

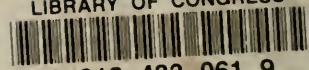
CURTAIN.

MAY 4 1911

One copy del. to Cat. Div.

MAY 11 1911

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 018 483 061 9